

CREATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE  
FOR  
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

MASTER'S PROJECT

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by

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## CHAPTER I



## Introduction

We are born hungry. We are hungry for food, for warmth, for a loving touch, and for something else as well. We are hungry to understand, to make sense of the world around us. Almost as soon as we begin to talk, we ask a single question, over and over again. "Why?" And we are still asking that same question when we say, only slightly later, "Tell me a story." (Bauer, 1992).

Human beings are story telling animals. That's what separates us from other creatures, not just having thumbs or using tools (Bauer, 1992).

Stories help us to make sense of our world. They teach us what is possible. They let us know that others before us have struggled as we do. If Hansel and Gretel can escape the wicked witch, so can we. If the poor prince is rewarded for his kindness, then we might be, too (Bauer, 1992).

So from an early age, we begin to shape our own world by telling stories ourselves. "I'll be the mother and you be the father and this is our house and ....." Our stories put us in charge. They allow us to explore our feelings without having to face the consequences of acting them out. They help us understand what it means to be a human being (Bauer, 1992).

Creating stories is important work for the professional writer. It is as important as building highways or selling shoes or making laws. And we each have our own stories to tell, whether we are professional writers or not. Even when we are very young - perhaps especially when we are very young - stories bubble inside us. When we share them with others, we discover that they are usually eager to hear them (Bauer, 1992).

Where do storytellers find the wisdom to discover their own stories, the ones

others are longing to hear? From no place more mysterious than their own hearts. Thus, the first thing we must know before we can begin to write a story is ourselves. We don't need to understand every crevice and corner. No one ever does, no matter how long we live. But we must understand some of our own truths. What ideas excite us? What makes us laugh..... or cry? What are we struggling to understand?(Bauer, 1992).

Learning to tell-a good story is hard work. Learning to write-one, refining our words for an audience we may never see, is harder still. It's at least as hard as learning to ski or to play a musical instrument. But writing stories can be the kind of work that makes us glad to be alive. It stretches our mental muscles and leaves us feeling excited and proud. It can be work we love to do (Bauer, 1992).

Perhaps the kindergarten classroom provides an excellent setting to inspire creative material for storytelling and possible story writing. Although the kindergarten classroom is usually composed of varying interests, abilities, and personalities, these young children always seem to share one common element: their love for children's literature.

A joy to behold is the expressions on the children's faces as the early childhood educator captivates his/her young audience while telling or reading a story.

Perhaps no other age is more willing to "live" or "feel" a story than the kindergarten child. Without a doubt, storytime in the kindergarten classroom can paint a picture worth a thousand words.

The story that is presented as Chapters Three and Four of this project was first told by the author to her kindergarten students. The students were so awed and receptive that the author was inspired to create a work of children's literature.

The story, One Special Christmas, is designed to please young children ages

four through eight years. Perhaps the preschool age child would enjoy the material during a storytime event, while the primary child would find the story still pleasing to the ear as well as appropriate silent reading material.

## Definition of Terms

1. Early Childhood - - the developmental years from birth to eight years of age.
2. Picture Book - - a type of book aimed at the preschool to 8-year-old that tells the story primarily with artwork.
3. Character - - a person, animal, or object in a story
4. Setting - - the time, place, environment, and surrounding circumstances during a story
5. Plot - - the plan of action in a story
6. Theme - - the recurring, unifying subject or idea of a story
7. Style - - a way of using words to express an idea or thoughts; a manner or mode of expression in language
8. personification - - an object or animal takes on the qualities of a person; becomes humanistic
9. dummy book - - hand-made mock-up of a book
10. signatures - - an eight, sixteen, or thirty-two page group of pages which results from the press sheet being folded and cut
11. Galleys - - the first typeset version of a manuscript that has not yet been divided into pages
12. Query - - a letter to an editor designed to capture his/her interest in an article you purpose to write
13. Cover letter - - a brief letter, accompanying a complete manuscript, especially useful if responding to an editor's request for a manuscript. A cover letter may also accompany a book proposal. A cover letter is not a query letter.
14. Royalty - - an agreed percentage paid by the publisher to the writer or illustrator for each copy of his work sold

15. Advance - - a sum of money that a publisher pays a writer prior to the publication of a book. It is usually paid in installments, such as one-half on signing the contract; one half on delivery of a complete and satisfactory manuscript. The advance is paid against the royalty money that will be earned by the book.

## CHAPTER II

## Review of Literature

Many people are surprised to discover that childhood has not always been considered an important time of life. When students of children's literature look at the beautiful books published to meet children's needs, interests, and reading levels, many are amazed to learn that not too long ago books were not written specifically for children. Changes in printing technology provided affordable books, but more important were changes in social attitudes toward children. When society looked upon children as little adults who must rapidly step into the roles of their parents, children had little time or need to read books relevant to a nonexistent childhood. When childhood began to be viewed as a special part of the human life cycle, literature written specifically for children became very important (Norton, 1991).

Within the context of human history as a whole, the history of children's literature is very short. Neither early tales told through the oral tradition nor early books were created specifically for children. When children's books were eventually written, they usually mirrored the dominant cultural values of their place and time. Thus, a study of children's literature in Western Europe and North America from the fifteenth century through contemporary times reflects both changes in society as a whole and changes in social expectations of children and in the family (Norton, 1991).

A comparison of children's literature written between the 1930's and the early 1960's with children's literature written in the 1970's and the 1980's reveals both similarities and differences between the characterizations of the American family in the two periods. Many books still portray strong family ties and stress the importance of personal responsibility and human dignity, both the happy, stable unit of the earlier

literature is often replaced by a family in turmoil as it adjusts to a new culture, faces the prospects of surviving without one or both parents, handles the disruption resulting from divorce, or deals with an extended family, exemplified by grandparents or a foster home. Later literature also suggests that many acceptable family units do not conform to the traditional American model (Norton, 1991).

Times have changed and the kind of children's books that were published in the 1980's inevitably reflect a changing economic background and, increasingly as we move into the 1990's, a massive change in our educational structure at all levels from learning to read to literature read at all ages of schooling (Eccleshare, 1991).

As the world was changing, views of childhood were changing too. Emphasis in children's literature mirrored the new attitudes and world developments. Childhood was becoming, at least for middle-and upper-class children, a more carefree and enjoyable period of life, and this change was reflected in the increase in fantasy stories for children. As adventures explored unknown areas of the world, their experiences inspired new adventure stories. Also, the characters of specific families and localities were captured in the growing popularity of literature about ordinary people, places, and events in sometimes extraordinary circumstances (Norton, 1991).

Following a rabbit down a rabbit hole or walking through a wardrobe into a mythical kingdom sounds like fun. There is nothing wrong with admitting that one of the primary values of literature is pleasure, and there is nothing wrong with turning to a book to escape or to enjoy an adventure with new or old book friends. Time is enriched, not wasted, when children look at beautiful pictures and imagine themselves in new places. When children discover enjoyment in books they develop favorable attitudes toward them that usually extend into a lifetime of appreciation (Norton, 1991).



Books are the major means of transmitting our literary heritage from one generation to the next. Each new generation can enjoy the words of Lewis Carroll, Louisa May Alcott, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mark Twain. Through the work of storytellers such as the Brothers Grimm, each generation can also experience the folktales originally transmitted through the oral tradition (Norton, 1991).

Literature plays a strong role in helping us understand and value our cultural heritage as well. Developing positive attitudes toward our own culture and the cultures of others is necessary for both social and personal development. Carefully selected literature can illustrate the contributions and values of many cultures. It is especially critical to foster an appreciation of the heritage of the ethnic minorities in American society. A positive self-concept is not possible unless we respect others as well as ourselves; literature can contribute considerably toward our understanding and thus our respect (Norton, 1991).

Lenore Weitzman, a children's book editor puts it this way: Through books children learn about the world outside of their immediate environment; they learn what other boys and girls do, say, and feel; they learn about what is wrong and right, and they learn what is expected of their age. In addition, books provide children with role models - images of what they can and should be (Rochelle, 1991).

The vicarious experiences of literature result in personal development as well as pleasure. Without literature, most children could not relive the European colonists' experiences of crossing the ocean and shaping a new country in North America; they could not experience the loneliness and fear of a fight for survival on an isolated island; they could not travel to distant places in the galaxy. Historical fiction provides children with opportunities to live in the past. Science fiction allows them to speculate

about the future. Contemporary realistic fiction encourages them to experience relationships with the people and environment of today. Because children can learn from literature how other people handle their problems, characters in books can help children deal with similar problems, as well as understand other people's feelings (Norton, 1991).

Informational books relay new knowledge about virtually every topic imaginable, and they are available at all levels of difficulty. Biographies and autobiographies tell about the people who gained knowledge or made discoveries. Photographs and illustrations show the wonders of nature or depict the processes required to master new hobbies. Realistic stories from a specific time bring history to life. The use of concept books that illustrate colors, numbers, shapes, and sizes may stimulate the cognitive development of even very young children (Norton, 1991).

Any discussion about the values of literature must stress the role that literature plays in nurturing and expanding the imagination. Books take children into worlds that stimulate additional imaginative experiences when children tell or write their own stories and interact with each other during creative drama inspired by what they have read. Both well-written literature and illustrations, such as those found in picture books and picture storybooks, can stimulate aesthetic development as well (Norton, 1991).

Whether amateur or professional, all writers should have one particular goal in common: to reach out and connect in a lasting way with the minds and hearts of their readers (Carpenter, 1992).

So, too, when we write for children, we must write as we always do. Only better (Yolen, 1976).

In an adult book, we might change a character's hair color or turn the heroine's eyes from green to blue half way through the book. The overage adult reader will

forgive us. Not the child (Yolen, 1976).

Remember in Mary Poppins when the Banks twins are listening to the starling and are told that, like it or not, they will forget how to talk to the animals as they grow up? It is the price of becoming an adult. They don't believe it, of course. Which of us really believes in the inevitability of change when it applies to ourselves? Yet slowly the Banks twins do forget (Yolen, 1976).

Look at us now. We are grown up. We have forgotten how to talk to the animals, forgotten so much that we do not believe we ever could. And we forget too, that underneath man is a kind of animal. And so we have forgotten how to talk with one another. Especially to our children. It is not a generation gap. It is a species gap (Yolen, 1976).

For the truth of the matter is that children read with their whole hearts. They may ask at the beginning, "Is it true?" Yet even if you say, "No, it is just a story," it is never just a story to them. It is a life to live, an entire and very real life to live (Yolen, 1976).

According to Jane Yolen, there are essentially three ways of writing for children. They are also three ways of living, in case one cares to apply them. In the words of science fiction writer Harlan Ellison, "You are what you write." And conversely, "you write what you are" (Yolen, 1976).

Author Yolen believes the three ways of writing are these: 1. benign indifference; 2. creative outrage; and 3. take joy.

Benign indifference means that as a writer you are indifferent to your subject, uninvolved with your characters, even at times unenthusiastic about the project on which you are working. It is a term that too often describes the hack writer. It is what can happen if you write for a living instead of living for your writing (Yolen, 1976).

All writing, like life, should be approached with passion, whether passion for a

subject, character, or twist of plot. An author must be involved or he does not involve the reader or listener. This is especially true when writing for children (Yolen, 1976).

If you write with benign indifference, you might as well be composing a term paper for which you need a C in order to pass, or a grocery list, or a thank-you for the thirteenth casserole dish you have received as a wedding present. And you should expect your readers to be just as indifferent to what you have written. Being unresponsive to the needs of your characters or manipulating them to suit the plot rather than letting them grow organically are typically symptoms of an author suffering from benign indifference (Yolen, 1976).

It is easier, of course, to be indifferent. But no one has ever said writing is easy. Writing is one of the hardest ways to make a living. It is also one of the hardest ways to make life. Oh, you can make surrogate life with relative ease - using benign indifference. But to make a book that will really live, you need passion (Yolen, 1976).

Jane Yolen believes the second way of writing for children is creative outrage. When an author wants to imprint on the minds of his young readers certain facts or attitudes, he writes in this manner. But what usually happens is that the result is either a moralistic or a didactic book (Yolen, 1976).

The earliest books for young readers were just this kind. Published in 1513, John Foxe's Actes and Monuments of These Latter Perilous Days, known as The Book of Martyrs, became the Puritan child's bedside companion. The young readers were instructed to emulate the religious martyrs who went piously through life and joyously to death, and much detail was spent on each maiming, each brutality (Yolen, 1976).

By the nineteenth century, a new threat hung over the reader's head - the threat of Information. The Creative Outragers had struck again. Authors of this age, insisted

on giving children the full measure of their own narrow learning. Each story, each tale, was not to amuse but to teach (Yolen, 1976).

Didacticism and moralism are with us again today. Librarians crying out for more and more factual books have helped bring about this renaissance of didacticism. We are in a technological period, and too often the idea is to cram a child from age one with assorted figures and facts, to prepare him for life (Yolen, 1976).

Moralism, too, is flowering again. Only as practitioners of the newest art of public relations, we don't call it that. We call it The New Realism. In books of The New Realism, adult writers try to teach young readers all they should know about the dangers of drugs, drink, divorce, and other sordid realities. Both the didactic books and the moralistic books are written with "creative outrage." At its worst, this kind of writing is tract writing, propagandizing (Yolen, 1976).

Perhaps it is called creative outrage instead of just rage because the prefix "out" continues the thrust of the anger. Rage is something burning only within an individual. Outrage reaches beyond the initial anger and turns the rage into creative action. The Newberry winner Sounder (William H. Armstrong) is an example of good creative outrage. This work may not necessarily sound angry, as a revolutionary speech to a mob sounds angry. However, it is defining its anger in literary terms, in extended allegories. It is a working-out of the author's rage against injustice. The problem with this approach to writing, especially when writing books for children, is the trap of excess teaching and excess moralizing (Yolen, 1976).

Always remember, as an author you are a storyteller. Not a preacher. Not a prophet. Not determined to save the world through pictures and text. After all, one need not moralize to set a moral. For of course there will be a moral in what you write. You are what you write. You write what you are. (Or as Immanuel Kant says: "We see

things not as they are, but as we are.") If you are someone who has real morals and moral value in your life, they will come out all unbidden in your writing. Or, in the words of C.S. Lewis: "The moral inherent in your books will rise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking in the course of your life" (Yolen, 1976).

The third way of writing for children is encompassed in that curious phrase "Take Joy." The phrase itself comes from a beautiful letter written by the medieval monk Fra Giovanni. The portion of the letter that concerns us goes like this: "The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach, is joy. Take Joy" (Yolen, 1976).

Writing books for children, should be filled with hope, with joy, with life. And fine writing, which is a celebration of life, is therefore - in the deeper sense - joy filled (Yolen, 1976).

This does not mean that there should be no sadness in books for children, no tears, only happy endings. Yet behind each sadness there should be hope or a chance. Storytellers tell what could be true, what is true in another sense, and so their art is conceived in joy. The storyteller, especially the teller of tales for young people, must seek out behind the shadows and Take Joy (Yolen, 1976).

Once you have looked behind the shadows, you will come upon the real reason that you are writing for children, writing good books, writing literature. Ordinary books are opaque and do not admit of light. But literature is many-faceted, prismatic. Light shines through the excellent books or dances off. And the rainbows it gives shines on and on in a child's life in a thousand different ways (Yolen, 1976).

Such writers as Margaret Wise Brown, Dr. Seuss, Ruth Krauss, and Robert McCloskey have created worlds in children's books that have inspired generations of children to love reading and writing. How they've achieved this is summarized by

Charlotte Zolotow, author of more than fifty books for children of the picture book age: "I write for the child in me" (Roberts, 1986).

Is writing for children easy? "I'd like to write for children." One hears it so often. Perhaps you believe that because it's for children it's easy. You know children. You may be a grandparent, a mother, an aunt, an uncle, or a teacher. You tell them stories, sometimes making up the story as you go. You may have one story that is such a favorite they want it again and again. Surely, you think, this would make a book. If you only knew how to write it (Woolley, 1989).

Actually, there is no relation between telling a story to a child cuddled in your lap or snug beside you on a bed and writing a story so sharply outstanding that some editor will decide to buy it, and some publisher will believe a profit can be earned by making it into a book (Woolley, 1989).

The child on your lap loves your full attention, the security of your nearness, the sound and rhythm of your words. This youngster will drink in any story you tell (Woolley, 1989).

The written story must have such qualities of interest, personality, humor, and setting that some editor, with a pile of manuscripts from hopeful authors on the desk, will pick up yours, read it, read it again probably with surprise and excitement, then hand it on to an associate for judgment. The manuscript may be sent to an outside reviewer for a third opinion (Woolley, 1989).

Practical considerations ensue. Is the story right for the age group to which the editor is responsible? Is it the right length? If this is a picture book how costly will the artwork be? Will reviewers for newspapers and professional journals find the book worthy of notice? Will buyers for bookshops, librarians, and school supervisors who purchase books for classroom use - and who have, invariably, a tight budget - read the

blurb in the publisher's catalog, or a review, and decide to allot a bit of the precious money for its purchase? (Woolley, 1989).

If you want your story to be that special one picked out of the pile - and of course you do - you must accept the fact that juvenile writing is a craft to be worked at and developed to a high degree of perfection; that a writer for children must demonstrate the same skills as a writer of adult novels (Woolley, 1989).

This is a challenge. Without some guidance most beginning authors do a lot of stumbling in the dark. But tell yourself that every successful author was a beginner once. Innate talent for writing cannot be taught, but if you have the talent in some degree you can acquire the techniques necessary to truly professional writing (Woolley, 1989).

Aside from a mastery of technique, there are certain qualities and abilities, background and knowledge that a serious writer for children should possess (Woolley, 1989).

Juvenile authors are certainly not childish, but a good one has a quality of mind we might call childlike. You must know what is important or funny or embarrassing or heartbreaking to a child. Perhaps total recall is natural equipment for a children's author. Your ability to write for children comes partly from association with children, observations of childhood, but largely it comes from remembering (Woolley, 1989).

Certainly one must be able to identify with childhood, to remember vividly what it was like to be a child, and to recognize intimately the true atmosphere of the child world. It seems one cannot learn that state of being. Writers for children seem to be profoundly oriented, for some mysterious reason, to that other world. Perhaps it is because they are so oriented, so attuned, with all the impressions of childhood still inside and crying out to be expressed, that they become writers for children. What they



have to say flows most naturally, instinctively, from that world (Cameron, 1985).

Remembering, however, is not enough if you are planning to write about children of today. It has been said that children do not change - only the world around them does. But consider how this world has changed since you were a child. Those changes cannot fail to exert a powerful impact on the children of today, their attitudes and interests, and their reading (Woolley, 1989).

Children now, often unsupervised, are exposed to hours of television daily - to violence, murder, thievery, trickery, and perverted notions of humor. The child who stares at the screen may have come home after school to a locked and empty house. Probably hot oatmeal for breakfast is unknown in this house; there is no gathering around the dinner table, because Mother is hurrying out to her nighttime job. Once dinner was the heart of the family group (Woolley, 1989). - Perhaps a statement from Roald Dahl's book, Matilda, best expresses this tradition as Mr. Wormwood declares: "Supper is a family gathering, and no one leaves the table till it's over!" (Culley, 1991). But in today's world, more often than not, there is no common dinner hour, no time during the day when parents and children come together and talk (Woolley, 1989).

There are, of course, homes where Mother sees the children off to school with a hug and puts a meat loaf and baking potatoes in the oven at night; where Daddy comes home to be played with and shown the fine report card. If you are writing out of an ideal personal background like this one, you must never forget those potential but hard-to-reach readers who know a different home in what may seem to you an alien and frightening world (Woolley, 1989).

Writing for children offers a wide variety of story types. If ideas for books do not come to you from daily doings, you might deliberately search your life. Analyze several experiences of your childhood. Why were they important? How did they turn

out? Could you make them work out differently in a story? What really happened may not be enough; you will need to expand and invent. And don't just remember what happened; remember how you felt (Woolley, 1989).

You must remember the excited anticipation as you found your seats at the circus, how you laughed out loud at the clown and gasped, hands clapped to the mouth at the perilous feats of the tightrope walkers; or the bewilderment of your first day of school and the smell of apples, chalk, and fresh paint in a strange new place, the classroom. Even the smallest incidents should stand out (Woolley, 1989).

Remember, an extraordinary source of material comes from you, yourself. So explore your own feelings. These are the truest feelings you can write about because you know them intimately. Since you write about and for children, move back in time to when you were a child. Think back on how you felt, reacted to things; how you spoke, cried, and thought. Remember your first day at a new school, the first time a certain boy or girl smiled at you; remember wearing a new pair of shoes, sharing something with someone you didn't like, a nasty grown-up, what your room smelled like, how a piece of bubblegum tasted, or a game you invented with your best friend (Woolley, 1989).

Go back into your childhood; put together scattered thoughts or memories until you have pieced together a whole episode. Go through a family album and try to remember what led up to the taking of each picture. What time of day was it? How did you feel about the other people in the picture? Where was the picture taken? How old were you? Where did you get the sweater or baseball cap you wore in that picture? (Woolley, 1989).

The more you work at piecing together the clues you see before you, the more you will evoke whole episodes and flavors and feelings of the time. You, as author, will

find yourself drawing on this personal treasury as your storybook unfolds (Woolley, 1989).

The books that look the easiest to write - picture books- are, by far, the most difficult to write. Why? Because they depend on so few words to say so much. (Seuling, 1984). A picture book must have the gift of simplicity. Simplicity is the most demanding and elusive of disciplines (Fleischman, 1987). And yes, the picture book should sing (Silvey, 1987).

"I write and I draw, but what I really do is learn. I learn about something that interest me, something I can find wonder in, and I try to explain it clearly - without losing the wonder." This is Jan Adkins speaking, author of The Art and Industry of Sand Castles. He understands, as the success of his many books attests, that the most ordinary objects and events make for a successful picture book, so long as the author doesn't lose that essential sense of wonder (Roberts, 1986).

A picture book is a child's first introduction to reading. Usually oversize in format, illustrated on every page, it presents a story concisely and evocatively. It used to be that publishers aimed their picture books at ages 4-7 or 5-8. This has changed; publishers have discovered the early age groups as an untapped market. Editors are now looking for picture books for the two-to five-year old (Roberts, 1986).

The reason for this downward shift in age groups is that there is a new and still growing market for preschool materials. The day care center attracts very young children who want books for their story hours. Parents, better educated and more affluent than at any time in the past, are eager for their children to get the reading habit early, and encourage looking at books long before the child is able to read by himself. "Sesame Street" has introduced literacy and curiosity about the outside world at earlier and earlier ages. For children two and three, the wonders of the world around

them are ten times as fascinating as any fantasy (Roberts, 1986).

But mention “picture book” to a parent, librarian, or teacher, and you will undoubtedly hear a list of fiction: Curious George, Make Way for Ducklings, The Runaway Bunny, Where the Wild Things Are, and even Little Black Sambo (Roberts, 1986).

The things that make a picture book successful are embodied in these old favorites. They combine excitement with a cozy resolution, they tell a story in a short space, with pictures doing more than half the work, and they reflect the concerns of early childhood (Roberts, 1986).

Picture books are “written” with pictures as much as they are written with words. A picture book is read to the very young child who doesn’t know how to read yet; consequently, the child sees the pictures and hears the words directly, without having to deal with the intermediate step of reading the printed word. By telling a story visually, instead of through verbal description, a picture book becomes a dramatic experience: immediate, vivid, moving. A picture book is closer to theater and film, silent films in particular, than to other kinds of books (Shulevitz, 1985).

Young children are interested in the same things their older brothers and sisters are, but the size of the book - and the idea behind it - must necessarily be smaller for preschool children. It takes a keen sense of observation, attention to detail, and a child-size perspective to take small ideas and approaches and turn them into book-sized ideas (Roberts, 1986).

In all kinds of fiction and nonfiction picture books, there are five rules of thumb that a successful writer keeps in mind:

1. Read-aloud quality. Children this age can’t read. They are read to. Is your manuscript rhythmic, dramatic, and exciting? Does it lend itself to different nuances of

voice and delivery? Monotonous rhyme, choppy sentences, and poor organization can drive an adult reading aloud stark raving mad. As Linda Zuckermann of Intervisual Publications points out, writing for children is a special art, even though there still exists the mistaken notion that it's an easier one. "It's a little like assuming it's easier to write poetry than a novel, and it's not," she says (Roberts, 1986).

2. Appeal to adults. Preschoolers don't buy their own books. After they have become acquainted with a book, they may request it again and again, but adult appeal will determine whether your book gets read to the child in the first place. Is your subject matter one that adults want children to be interested in? A book about candy, for instance, might grab a child's attention, but it's unlikely to find favor with adults. Is your description of the subject well written enough to appeal to adults who face the prospect of reading the book over and over again? (Roberts, 1986).

3. Illustrate ability. Children of the picture book age expect their books to have lots of pictures in them. Do your ideas lend themselves to illustrations? Are your images graphic enough to reinforce the visuals an artist will provide? "Illustrate-ability" is an elusive quality, but it can be summed up in two major points: concrete images and careful sequence. The book, once it's illustrated, should have artistic unity and easy-to-follow structure (Roberts, 1986).

4. Simplicity without superficiality. Many authors find subjects that interest them, and figure all they have to do is simplify the idea for the youngest child. But unless a subject is truly child-sized, your picture book will not work. A simple treatment with the interest level exactly at the two-to-five range will necessarily leave out important facets of the subject, resulting in a simplistic treatment. Your young audience wants to know everything about the subject your book discusses, so it's important to choose an idea with small enough dimensions so that it can be explored

fully in a short picture book (Roberts, 1986).

5. Child-level continuity. Continuity is very important in writing for the youngest age group. Children want suspense and surprise, but their powers of comprehension are not so well developed that they can jump from subject to subject. The concept for your picture book should be simple and small enough so that you can explore its ramifications logically and carefully, bringing your audience along with you as you go (Roberts, 1986).

These rules of thumb are essential to writing for young children; every manuscript you write should take them into consideration (Roberts, 1986).

The picture book for preschoolers can be thirty-two pages long, with three of those pages going for the title page, dedication page, and copyright page. This allows you only twenty-nine pages - twenty-nine sentences or short paragraphs - to pursue your ideas. This is a difficult task, demanding the economy of poetry, the adventurousness of a novel, and the word/picture synchronism of a movie. But don't despair. There are tricks to help you (Roberts, 1986).

The first trick and probably the best one, is to structure your idea carefully. This enhances the illustrate - ability, the read-aloud quality, and the continuity of your text (Roberts, 1986).

Writers seem to fall into two categories when it comes to ideas: those who are always looking for a good idea, and those who have so many ideas, they don't know which one to work on first (Seuling, 1984).

Let's take the first group. These writers have good ideas, often, but forget or misplace them. The first rule, and the most crucial one, then, is to carry a notebook with you at all times (Seuling, 1984).

Jot down ideas as they come to you, wherever that may happen - for characters,

behavior, dialogue, titles, anything. Trusting that you will remember a good idea until you get home, to the office, or someplace where you can settle down, leads to about 99 percent loss of those ideas.

Writing it down, even in hieroglyphic - like notes, at least calls to mind and then you can fill in the rest. Use this notebook of thoughts, phrases, and ideas for your future work (Seuling, 1984).

Let your notes run free, and use all forms of writing - dialogue, prose, verse, sayings, phrases - whatever helps you remember. Putting down these fragmentary reminders is a way, too, of training yourself to see in a new way, to be alert to all the possibilities around you, to cultivate your power of observation, your ability to absorb detail and store it (Seuling, 1984).

Keeping a journal can be very useful to your writing as well as a fascinating personal experience. Just as the artist's sketchbook shows his growth from year to year, so will your journal show yours. At the same time, the events in your life will provide, in bits and pieces of real, everyday life, a resource from which you can draw when you need some very real, very human material to bolster your writing (Seuling, 1984).

Another way to urge ideas to the surface is to keep yourself open to all forms of communication, from news items and magazine articles to TV programs, cereal ads, overheard conversations, and theater posters. Clip photos and articles. Look for plot ideas, characters, mysteries, settings, colors, and subjects for study and research (Seuling, 1984).

A book for children of any age is usually about children, especially about one child character, and the story will be the story it is because of the nature of the child you have chosen as your chief character (Woolley, 1989).

You, the author, feels strongly about this character, real or imaginary, or you

would not be writing the book. Are you writing about a girl? Do you love this child? Do you feel she needs help in some way? Maybe she amuses or exasperates you, or both. Your problem is to get her down on paper so your readers see her just as you do and feel the same as you feel about her. They must come to care strongly about what happens to her ( Woolley, 1989).

Before you start writing about this girl, you yourself must be absolutely clear about her. No fuzzy impressions. You must know her better than you know your sister because you must know what goes on in her head and in her heart. You also need to know how old she is, how tall, what color eyes, how her hair grows, what sort of parents and home she has. You also need to be sure about her temperament, likes and dislikes, sense of humor, talents, ambitions, and IQ (Woolley, 1989).

You think about all this until it sinks into your subconscious. You will never pass all this background information on to your readers in so many words, but you will know your girl so well that you will never make her act in an unnatural way or put words in her mouth she would not use (Woolley, 1989).

If your character is based on a real child you are probably very familiar with that boy or girl. It is seldom, however, that you can make a book character exactly like the real-life person. Circumstances in your book will no doubt be different from the life circumstances in which you know the child, so you will keep the real child in your head but adapt for the purpose of your story (Woolley, 1989).

One technical point is how to show early in the story who your principal character is. The main character should be involved in some action or dialogue or thinking right at the start (Woolley, 1989).

There is one all-important way to distinguish the main character. It is known as the technique of the single viewpoint. As author, your job is not to act as a



commentator reporting a ball game; your job is to take the reader inside the main character so that he becomes the ballplayer and plays the game. Reader identification, this is called. The single viewpoint, that of your lead character, and reader identification are especially important in juvenile books because children, perhaps unconsciously, want to be that boy or girl in the story (Woolley, 1989).

If the young reader is to identify closely with your character you must make that reader not only think but feel, smell, taste, hear, and see along with the child in the story. Heat, cold, muscle strains, and pain may reach out to draw your reader inside the character and the story (Woolley, 1989).

Remember, children love the texture of things, the smells, the tastes, the color, the sounds of things; plan to use as much sensory detail as possible in your stories. But it has to be an integral part of the story, not just words thrown in at measured intervals. As a writer for the young, train yourself to gather these impressions not only in grown up words, but in words a small child might use. Listen to the living sources of a vitally expressive vocabulary running about your house or neighborhood, or chattering in the seat behind you on the bus. Your eyes and ears must always be open, and the impressions you collect should be kept at the tips of your wits to garnish whatever tale you concoct (Wyndham, 1984).

An animal is often the main character in a picture book. Little children take animals seriously as people, and sometimes you can use an animal to get an idea across where you could not use a human (Woolley, 1984).

Many children's stories with animal characters are so closely associated with human life-styles, behavior patterns and emotions that it is difficult to separate them from stories with human characters. If these stories were read without reference to the illustrations or to a specific type of animal, children might assume that the stories are

about children and adults like themselves. These stories may be popular with children because the children can easily identify with the characters' emotions and actions (Norton, 1991).

In some animal stories, the animals live in traditional animal settings, such as meadows, barnyards, jungles, and zoos. The animals in these stories display some animal traits, but they still talk like humans and have many human feelings and problems (Norton, 1991).

Many young children like a combination of fast, slapstick adventure and an animal with easily identifiable human characteristics, such as Hans Rey's Curious George. Readers are introduced to this comedic monkey as he observes a large yellow hat lying on the jungle floor. His curiosity gets the better of him, he is captured by the man with the yellow hat, and his adventures begin. The text and illustrations develop one mishap after another, as George tries to fly but falls into the ocean; grabs a bunch of balloons and is whisked away by the wind; and is finally rescued again by the man with the yellow hat. These rapid verbal and visual adventures bring delight to young children, who are curious about the world around them and would like to try some of the same activities (Norton, 1991).

However, another belief is that editors won't buy stories about animal characters who talk. This is not entirely true. James C. Gribble, editor of Clarion Books, was once speaking to a group of writers at a conference about fantasy and the imagination. A woman raised her hand timidly and asked, "Mr. Gribble, how do you feel about talking animals?" Jim thought a moment and replied, "Well, it depends on what they have to say." That's the truth of it. The fact is if characters are drawn convincingly, and you have them in a good, solid, well-plotted story, there is no problem (Seuling, 1984).

The technique of giving human characteristics to inanimate objects is called personification. Children usually see nothing wrong with a house that thinks, a doll

that feels, or a shovel that responds to emotions. Virginia Lee Furton, a favorite writer for small children, is the highly skilled creator of things that have appealing personalities and believable emotions (Norton, 1991).

Many of the most enjoyable books read to and by younger children develop characterization through personification. This is probably so believable because children tend to give human characteristics to their pets and toys. Personification is an excellent introduction to style for younger children because the texts that include personification of objects and animals often are reinforced through illustrations that also personify the subjects (Norton, 1991).

Writers who bring inanimate objects to life often start by observing people. What people do, how they react, when they talk, when they're silent are so intriguing to these observers - turned - writers that they never forget what they've seen and heard. Years later, sitting at their typewriters, they put these years of observation down on paper as exactly as a legal scholar citing cases (Roberts, 1986).

If writers are so interested in people, why do they write stories about tugboats, and mooses and cabooses and monkeys and elves? The child's own lively imagination is the most compelling, the most important, and the most delightful reason the writer has for indulging in fantasy. The child hasn't yet learned to scorn imaginery, to suspect fantasy, to value hard, cold facts over truth-conveying symbols. He is a poet still, open to words of wisdom from owls, trees, and people equally, to truthful situations dealing with mice or men or minibikes. What an irresistible opportunity - to write for an audience at once so receptive to the real world and to the world of the imagination! Then too, think of how diverse the picture book audience is, and what a short time the author has to capture its attention. An adult novelist has fifty years of novel-reading time to reach his audience. The picture book writer has only the years between two

and eight to captivate his reader, so he is going to use every trick in the book to get attention. A universally appealing character is the best insurance (Roberts, 1986).

One important element of a book for children is the setting. Your story, for whatever age group, should take place against a background the reader can clearly picture, believe in, and enjoy. The more real you make your background, the better the book will be (Woolley, 1984).

You do not need a strange or exotic setting for a juvenile book. Children love stories they feel at home in, and a familiar setting can bring instant reader identification. The child starting a book in which a whirling snowstorm rages outside the window will settle down with a little thrill of recognition. A child who does not live in a snow area may long to see just such a fall of snow (Woolley, 1984).

Even a familiar setting you must know well in all its details to make it real to your reader. If the setting is a fictitious house, draw a diagram of your house. Be sure you know how to get from front door to kitchen and the layout of the bedrooms. Know the furnishings, so you will not have a green sofa in one chapter and a red one in the next. You will not need all this any more than you will need all the information about your characters, but it will enable you to move people around with the assurance that you will not make a slip. The picture must be clear and unchanging in your mind if you are to make it real. The reader must become the storybook child who lives in the house. After awhile he may not be sure whether the house is in the book or down the street (Woolley, 1984).

The same is true for streets, gardens, and towns. Each should be its own place, with its special landmarks and characteristic features (Woolley, 1984).

It is useful to keep a notebook of interesting settings. You think you will remember, but you may forget some little detail that will lend realism to a scene. Some

authors are never without a notebook for any interesting incident or fact that can be jotted down (Woolley, 1984).

Words to describe a setting and give it exact reality arise from your own skill. Be selective. Avoid verbosity. And replace trite words and phrases with vivid images as you revise (Woolley, 1984).

Let's consider settings for picture books. Picture book authors cannot afford the wordage, within their few hundred words, to describe a setting, so on the artist devolves the responsibility for presenting that setting (Woolley, 1984).

A setting is not just something seen. A setting has sound and smell and things going on. As an author, you may need to sit in your garden quietly, day after day, before you become aware of all the things going on. A mole creeping out of the ground, chipmunks scampering home cheeks bulging with seed from the bird feeders. A squirrel chasing a catbird. Bees sipping nectar, rabbits munching marigolds, chickadees in line for the birdbath. A butterfly unfolding gorgeous wings on the phlox. Even a spider may weave her rain-sparkled web across the late-summer grass. Perhaps you have no idea so much is going on (Woolley, 1984).

Hold in your mind, when you create the setting for your book, that a child somewhere, never known to you, may treasure that place in memory forever. The thought may inspire you to special effort, more studied thought of the words you use. Make them words that deserve to live for some boy and girl (Woolley, 1984).

And now, knowing the boundaries of your product, you must have a story to tell. This means a story with a pattern, with growth and a climax. Too many beginners get a character in mind and sail off in a welter of cute sentences, some rhymes, and possibly an initial cunning situation. Without a carefully thought-out plan, they soon dissolve into no-story or an inconclusive little incident (Wyndham, 1984).

Plot is always a very necessary element in a juvenile book. In a plotted story, cause sets your main character off to take certain action to solve a problem, get out of a situation, or reach a certain goal. The "effect" is what happens to this person as a result of the action taken. The character must struggle to get what he or she wants and must be opposed vigorously, either by someone who wants the same thing, or by circumstances that stand in the way of the goal (Wyndham, 1984).

Character plus meaningful, directed action toward a previously planned desired end - that is the meaning and purpose of plot (Wyndham, 1984).

Writers go about plotting in different ways. Before you begin to plot you must have an idea that sets your creative wheels in motion. Your idea file, suggested earlier, may provide one, or you may prefer to cast about for ideas (Wyndham, 1984).

Nevertheless, in general, even the simplest picture book must have a story, in the sense of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Events must occur in a logical sequence that leads to a logical - or perhaps to a surprising - happy conclusion (Wyndham, 1984).

The child from two to seven is read to. You need not confine yourself to the "easy reading" vocabulary of some 200 to 500 words. Nevertheless, you still want to choose simple, rhythmic, expressive words a child can understand. A pattern of repetition can be a successful attention keeper for the very young, who cannot follow a wandering plot. The repeated words become a pleasing, familiar landmark (Wyndham, 1984).

For this age, plot should be the simplest plan of cause and effect: because of this, that happened. There is ample plot material for the picture story. Everyday happenings in play activities, family fun, home adventures make good subjects when given a fresh, unhackneyed treatment. Pets, toys, all sorts of possessions can furnish springboards for exciting adventures (Wyndham, 1984).

The child's inner world can be delved into also. Although his or her fears must be treated carefully, they offer fine story material. Fear of the dark, swimming, playmates, or animals can be dealt with and resolved. And the universal needs: to be secure - home, mother; to be loved; to achieve; to belong; to know - all these are also good material (Wyndham, 1984).

Fantasy has its place in plot material for the very young - and more of it is published now than a few years back. But whether in reality, adventure, or fantasy, the plot - or story line - can be described as getting your character to the foot of the tree, getting him up the tree, and then figuring out how to get him down again. The length of time he is up the tree, dangling his feet, or falling from branch to branch like Pooh Bear on his disastrous honey-swiping trip, is a matter of style and diversions. But the main plot line remains simple: to the tree, up the tree, and down (Yolen, 1976).

To decide whether an idea is good picture book material, look for an illustration in every three or four sentences. If there is action in your story enough for a book, you will see the pictures (Yolen, 1976).

In starting, it is important to plunge right in without preliminaries. Simple beginnings are in keeping with the straight-forward quality of a picture book. If the nature of the ensuing story is not made clear in your opening statement, it should become evident in the next few pages. There are a few words to a page in a picture book because the type is large, so you will still be close to the start of the book when you reach page three or four (Woolley, 1984).

In a picture book you will not need a lot of background information about your chief character, as you do for older books. All you need is one dominant trait (Woolley, 1984).

If you are writing a picture book about an animal, give special attention to

names. But whether minor characters in a fanciful animal story should have names, the answer is sometimes yes, sometimes no. If a dog, a cat, and a mouse live together and may be on something resembling friendly terms, they deserve names. E. B. White assigned his barnyard neighbors delightful names that give them distinct personalities and endear the creatures to us (Woolley, 1984).

If an animal appears just as a species and plays no part in the plot it should be nameless. Don't give a name or a personality to a mouse or a chipmunk that comes to a bad end. Children don't want their friends gobbled up, and if you give a character a name it becomes important (Woolley, 1984).

Your hero, child or animal, will have adventures, and those adventures must work up to an ending satisfactory to the reader. Make sure the ending comes fast. Build right up to it and stop. Give your ending a turn that rounds the circle and ties in with the beginning (Woolley, 1984).

Make Way for Ducklings ends quickly after the Mallards' perilous march, wasting no words to show the ducklings gobbling peanuts and easily dozing on their island (Woolley, 1984).

Where the Wild Things Are, having started with to - bed - with - no - supper, shows Max home again with supper waiting still hot (Woolley, 1984).

Stories aren't simply entertainment, as people often suppose. Every story has a point or theme. It may have several, actually, but it will have one that is dominant. The theme isn't often stated. In better stories it almost never is. But it is clearly there. If you want to know what a story means, look first at the solution to the story problem (Bauer, 1992).

Think of some of the classic stories you read when you were younger: The Little Engine that Could, Snow White, The Pied Piper of Hamelin. The theme



isn't stated in any of them. Still, it is obvious isn't it? (Bauer, 1992).

How is it made clear? By the way the problem is resolved. The little engine gets to the top of the mountain by thinking positive thoughts. "I think I can. I think I can." If the little engine, despite all his positive thoughts, ended up in a wreck at the bottom of the mountain, the theme would be entirely different, wouldn't it? (Bauer, 1992).

It isn't especially important that you be able to state your theme. Few writers do. And even if you can state it, you certainly won't want to stick it onto the end of your story. Fables come with morals tacked on like that. Other kinds of stories make their point through the story's action. It is crucial, though, that you understand your story's solution and what that solution means to you (Bauer, 1992).

Because of the concentrated form, there is a knack you must develop for moving the story along at appropriate "page-turning" points. A good rule is that there should be no more words on a page than are necessary for the time needed to examine the picture. Picture books move along something like short films and, even if you are not an artist, you have to think visually to understand how they work. Just as the filmmaker keeps your interest by changing the scene continually by varying the camera angles and distance from the subject, and by the time spend on each scene, so you as the "director" of your story have to remember to move things along. You need to know when you have stayed too long in one spot or with the same characters, when to introduce action or humor, when to build suspense, when to peak, and when to decline. A helpful exercise in understanding this flow is to make up a dummy for your picture book (Seuling, 1984).

The dummy book can be helpful to you in visualizing your story and in working out the flow from page to page. Make your dummy from folded typewriter paper and paste in the typewritten text, breaking it up wherever you think it is appropriate. This

technique is only to help you, not to send to the editor. But remember to allow room for the title page, copyright notice, and dedication (Seuling, 1984).

This all takes a good eye and ear and a superb sense of timing. Seeing the dummy book with your words pasted in place will move you along more quickly to understanding the limitations of space that you must learn in writing picture books. Nowhere will you see more clearly the excesses in your writing (Seuling, 1984).

Picture books are so spare that every bone shows. You can get away with some imperfections in a long book because they may be buried, but you cannot in a picture book. The quality of crispness, of making every sentence move the story along, is important. Look out for useless little words. See how many "wells", "ands", "buts", "thens", "nows", and "verys", you can take out. You will never miss them, but you will sharpen your style (Woolley, 1984).

If you can't read a picture book text by itself to an auditorium full of people and live by it, then you don't have a text (Moser, 1987).

Needless to say, the title of your story should tell what the story is about and make your reader want to read it (Dubrovin, 1984).

Just as a good joke doesn't give away the punch line before the ending, your title shouldn't give away any secrets in your story. However, your title should give some clue as to what type of story you have written (Dubrovin, 1984).

Some titles pop into your head almost as soon as the story idea itself. Others come as you are writing the story. But some titles take a great deal of hard work after the story is written (Dubrovin, 1984).

Remember that your title is an ad that is selling your story. Take time to create a good one (Dubrovin, 1984).

In a picture book the pictures are, obviously, important. Part of understanding a

picture book's structure is understanding the role that art plays in it. More than likely, the book's illustrations will take up half or more of the space. So, as an author, you must be aware of the large role the artist plays in your picture book. Remember: picture books should be the fusion of two artists - author and illustrator. It is necessary that one complement the other (Yolen, 1976).

Perhaps one should see the role of illustrator as that of a servant, a servant to the literature (Moser, 1987). A fine artist sees the relationship of words and pictures as the fusion of talents it should be. His perception lets him see the heart of a book, and he pictures what is on the paper and what is implied. He realizes exactly what the Caldecott winner, Uri Shulevitz, meant when he wrote: "I try to see the images contained in the words of the story and to 'listen' to the different pictorial elements and their impact ....." (Yolen, 1976). Thus, often times authors tend to think in pictures, rather than words (Brittain, 1988).

Since you as the author are seeking a fusion of text and pictures, it puts a special burden upon you, when you are writing a picture book, to keep pictures in your head. What you write must be illustratable. This means action is the most important thing, not the thoughts in your characters' heads. Psychological details are not easily illustrated; lots of conversation is not easily illustrated. But action is (Yolen, 1976).

Yet while you keep the idea of pictures in your head, you should not write copious instructions to your illustrator. One of the most easily recognizable traits of the amateur author is a manuscript filled with parenthetical instructions to an artist (Yolen, 1976).

The text itself should convey all that is in the parenthesis - if it is important. If it is not, then the author has to trust the artist's ability as he trusts his own (Yolen, 1976).

The only time parenthetical advice to an illustrator is warranted is for a book in

which the action of the story is - for the sake of humor or satire - exactly opposite the meaning of the words (Yolen, 1976).

So, while you should keep illustrations in mind in order to keep your writing sharp and spare, simple and direct, you should not have to give involved instructions to the artist. Here is a good, general rule: Strike out all instructions to the artist (Yolen, 1976).

You may or may not have any choice as to artist, or opportunity to discuss your wishes. You may never meet the artist. You may ask to see preliminary sketches of the art work for your book, or sketches may be sent without your asking, depending on the editor. You may see nothing at all until the finished book is in your hands (Yolen, 1976).

Unless you are a professional artist, do not attempt to illustrate your story. Editors have their own very definite ideas of how their books are to be illustrated, and the responsibility of illustrating your story is entirely theirs. Even if you are a good artist, do not present a complete array of finished sketches in full color. Some publishing houses never use color, while others use it sparingly, because color raises the costs of production. Do not prejudice the editors by letting them think you expect your work produced on the grand scale (Wyndham, 1984).

If your book is a picture book or a book with pictures, the editor will talk to you about the illustrator chosen for the book. If you are lucky (or you insist), you will see sketches or a dummy or at least the final drawings before they are printed. Take time to look at them carefully with a copy of your text at hand. There are always artists who forget to read your book with care, and add fillips of their own that actually contradict the text: Where the text says the child placed a mittened hand on the sled, the picture shows the hand quite bare; where the story mentions a cat's straight whiskers, the

illustrator has drawn curly ones. Every artist is a creator, and you must tactfully point out where your creation and the artist's are at odds. The editor will point out discrepancies, too. But sometimes a busy editor missed something. After all, he or she is working with a number of books. A not-so-busy author, must be alert to catch such mistakes - and not be afraid to mention them (Yolen, 1976).

As an author please remember, a picture book must be substantial enough to warrant a book of its own regardless of the illustrations. This is very important. Many writers of picture book texts rely, even unconsciously, on what the illustrations will do to bring out the intentions of the author. Your story must stand on its own. Text is almost always purchased separately from art. The exception to this is when the author is also an artist, or a team has conceived an idea for which art and text cannot be separated (Seuling, 1984).

For the writer who is also an illustrator, you must have the ability to handle the technical skills required, such as preparing a storyboard, making a dummy book, preparing color separations, drawing, and telling a story visually. An illustrator should have at least a familiarity with production techniques and have the ability to lay out a picture book in a balanced way, relating pictures to text in a smooth, interesting, and attractive fashion (Seuling, 1984).

Picture books are printed on both sides of a single press sheet. With careful cutting and folding, the sheet is turned into groups of folded pages called signatures, which are later sewn together and bound. The picture book illustrator must lay out a book with this format in mind. Of course, you always have to allow for the endpapers, title page, copyright notice, and whatever else the publisher wants to include (Seuling, 1984).

Any medium or technique that can be reproduced on a printed page is suitable for children's books. Choose the one that is comfortable for you and that suits the type of book you are doing. Experiment. Ezra Jack Keats won a Caldecott Medal for his work in collage, A Snowy Day. Robert Quackenbush works on waxed rice paper for interesting texture. Don Bolognese and Elaine Raphael used woodcuts for their picture book Turnabout (Seuling, 1984).

A cautionary note: paints do not reproduce as accurately as inks. Inks are absorbed into the paper and paints lie on top, which means they reflect light differently. A reproduction from inks is always more accurate to the eye. Printers can match inks to inks better than to paints for this reason. Permanent markers work fine but they tend to fade rather quickly; keep work done in markers out of strong light (Seuling, 1984).

The first step for the author as illustrator is usually to prepare thumbnail sketches or a storyboard, a rough plan of how you plan to lay out the book and distribute the illustrations. You make a storyboard by ruling the outlines of your pages on a large sheet of paper. Using the same colors you plan to use in the final pictures, sketch in very roughly what you will show in each picture and where the text will fit on the pages. The storyboard is discussed with the editor and art director before proceeding with full-sized sketches (Seuling, 1984).

Sketches are worked out to show more detail, but they are loose, not finished drawings. Placement of elements and characterization are important at this stage. A dummy book is made up with the sketches in place. All color should be indicated at this time. The editor and art director go over it, this time for content, continuity, color, and logic. (If a boy has green socks on page three, he should have green socks on page five.)

The typewritten copy should be pasted roughly in place. When the work gets final approval, you proceed with finished art (Seuling, 1984).

Remember, each color in a piece of art to be reproduced must be photographed and made into a separate plate for the printing press. The plates are run separately, first for black ink, then yellow, then blue, then red. For fewer colors, there will be fewer plates and fewer times that the paper has to go through the press. The camera-separation process, done with filters, is costly. Therefore, the artist is asked to do the separating of colors (Seuling, 1984).

Look in a children's book publisher's catalog. Books in color are described as two-color, three-color, or four-color. That tells you how many plates there were in making the book - usually how many separations the illustrator had to make for each piece of art (Seuling, 1984).

Many of the skills you need as an illustrator are learned in art school. Some, like color separation, may not be part of the curriculum unless illustration is featured. Occasional courses are offered in extension systems or adult education classes. A professional illustrator who lives nearby might be willing to tutor you in the basics of color separation or ink techniques or whatever you need to know. Once you have the essentials, you will learn by doing it (Seuling, 1984).

If you feel that you are a better writer than illustrator, continue to show your manuscripts to editors and, separately, take a portfolio of your artwork around to art directors, or mail your samples, if you live out of town. Keep the two apart for now, until you are equally confident in your writing and illustrating abilities (Seuling, 1984).

Unsolicited manuscripts from first-time authors pour into publishers' mailrooms. Some juvenile publishers receive 9,000 book manuscripts per year - that's 750 a month, or nearly 40 books submitted by hopeful authors every working day. That

publisher will buy at most 300 manuscripts in a year, fewer than one a day. In the face of such odds, do you stand a chance of ever selling your book? (Carpenter, 1992).

The answer is a resounding, YES. Children's publishing is hitting an all-time high. Publishers are hungry for well-written, high quality books, and editors are eager to develop new authors. You may have the drive and enthusiasm to write a children's book, but you still need more. Knowing how to make your manuscript stand out can definitely work to your advantage. By following a few simple steps, your manuscript could spend less time in the slush pile and more time in an editor's hands (Carpenter, 1992).

The first thing you must know - and believe - is that no matter how you send your manuscript, it will be read. Even if you address it, "To Whom It May Concern" and forget the ubiquitous stamped, self-addressed envelope; whether you send it First Class or by Special Fourth Class Manuscript Rate, it will be read. And whether you send it with a covering letter two pages long or no letter at all, it will be read. It will be read by the appropriate person, and, if necessary, returned. Editors know that authors are the lifeblood of a publishing house ( Yolen, 1976).

But ...and it is that "but" which you must beware of ... there are many ways to read a manuscript. There are many ways to handle a manuscript, and many ways to accept and/or reject a manuscript (Yolen, 1976).

It is wise to study the market carefully. Studying the market can be done in several ways, but the easiest of these is to write away for the publishers' catalogs. Visits to your local library or bookstore are also helpful, as are talks to the librarian or book seller (Yolen, 1976).

Next you might take time to send a query letter. A query is a letter to a juvenile editor asking whether the book you have written or hope to write might at least be



considered. The publisher's listing usually tells whether to query and on what type of book. Nonfiction usually calls for a query. The listing may indicate what you should include: usually a synopsis of the book and a couple of sample pages or chapters. Send a covering letter telling something about yourself and your background, why you are qualified to write this book, and why the book is important. Mark the envelope "Query" and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (Woolley, 1984).

A query letter is a shortcut, because it will be answered in a relatively short time - possibly in days, certainly no longer than a few weeks. Manuscripts quite often are kept months by a publishing company - and then rejected. But query letters are answered sooner (Yolen, 1976).

However, query letters may not be appropriate for some picture books or fantasy settings. They may never be able to give the flavor, style, or feeling that some books deserve (Yolen, 1976).

Editors who spend many hours reading prefer not to read anything they don't have to - like superfluous letters from authors. Don't write to explain the story. Your manuscript must speak for itself (Wyndham, 1984).

A letter is useful only if you have something pertinent to say about the story or yourself. If, for example, you're an expert in the field with which your story is concerned, say so. If some unusual fact is used in the plot, "document" it for authenticity. Many juvenile books are used in the classroom, so the editor must be sure that your statements are true, should a teacher or fact-happy youngster challenge them. In nonfiction and historical writing, documentation is very important, and all the references you have used should be listed at the front or back of your manuscript. This list may be mentioned in a letter to the editor (Wyndham, 1984).

By all means write a letter if a well-known author or critic has suggested that you send your story to a particular editor - but make this "introduction" a simple statement (Wyndham, 1984).

If your occupation has a bearing on your material, do mention it - briefly. Since you are writing for young people, the fact that you are (or have been) a teacher or librarian would be of interest to the editor. Should you be in any writing field, as with an advertising agency, mention it to suggest that you'd be willing to revise without tantrums, having been already conditioned by your job (Wyndham, 1984).

If you have sold or published anything anywhere, even if only a filler, mention that in your letter, listing the magazines, newspapers, or book publishers. But if you have no sales to your credit, don't worry about it. Editors are eager to discover talented newcomers (Wyndham, 1984).

Your own printed business stationery for correspondence with editors is a good investment to help promote your "solid citizen" image. Keep it simple - your name, address, and telephone number (including the area code) are all that is needed on your letterhead. Phrases like "Author," "Freelance Writer and Photographer," or "Specialist in Children's Literature" will mark you as an amateur (Wyndham, 1984).

When you send out that manuscript, whether in response to a letter or on an educated guess, remember these six important rules (Yolen, 1976).

1. Always type the manuscript, whether it is a one-page picture story or a 200 - page novel. An editor's job in part consists of reading hundreds of manuscripts every year. He will not take time to look at a handwritten story, even if you have a Master's Degree in calligraphy. Not typed, not read is the rule. Double - space the manuscript, leaving wide margins on both sides and on both the top and bottom. It gives your manuscripts a professional look (Yolen, 1976).

2. Be sure your name and address are on the title page. Also, number your pages consecutively. If by accident a manuscript is dropped, it can be reassembled with ease if it is numbered. With hundreds of manuscripts going through the editor's hands each year, the laws of probability point out that at least once or twice two manuscripts are going to get mashed together. Somehow it always seems to be your manuscript. Putting your name on each page and numbering your pages reduces the possibility of total loss (Yolen, 1976).

3. Always have at least one copy; two are preferable. It may be your manuscript that is lost in the mail, in the mailroom, or behind a bookcase in the editor's office. Also, keep copies of all your correspondence, not only as a record of where your manuscript has been, but also for posterity. Years from now, when you are rich and famous, someone will want to publish your letters. Even if that never happens, you can always enjoy the "true" story of the travels of your manuscript after your belief in it has been vindicated (Yolen, 1976).

4. Keep a card file of your manuscript's travels so that you do not send it back where it has already been. This may not be necessary with only one manuscript out, but once you have several manuscripts traveling around to the publishers, it is impossible to keep track of all the correspondences in your head. Since each trip out may entail up to three or four months, it would be a waste of valuable time to send a manuscript to someone who has already rejected it. The editor will not get to it sooner because he has already seen it. He will simply take two months to reject it all over again (Yolen, 1976).

5. Never submit the manuscript to more than one publisher at a time.

Multiple submissions are frowned upon by all concerned in the juvenile field. The usual reason given is that if two publishers both want to publish the book, you are then in the enviable position of being a seller in a seller's market; but nevertheless, setting up an auction of your manuscript is bad form - and you could stand to lose both publishers (Yolen, 1976).

6. A book manuscript should have a title or cover page. Short material does not require this, but it's a good idea to have it anyway because it helps to keep the script looking fresh through several submissions. The less you write, the more the editor will appreciate it. The only things that belong on this page are your name and address in the upper left hand corner; the approximate number of words in your manuscript on a line at the right; and halfway down the page, centered neatly, the title of your story. Two or three lines below this, center the word "by," and two or three lines below that, type your name exactly as you want it to appear in print (Wyndham, 1984).

Once the manuscript is on its way to the publishing house, forget it. Begin immediately on a new story or book or poem. This is the professional attitude. If you are working hard on something else, you will never notice how long it is taking you to hear from the publisher (Yolen, 1976).

It is going to take a long time, too. Anywhere from six weeks to four months is normal. This is why: When the manuscript reaches the publishing house, it is cataloged in by either a secretary or a manuscript clerk. Often you will receive a postcard stating that the company has received your script and is not responsible for the safety of the material. Then the manuscript is placed in one of three piles (Yolen, 1976).

If it is a manuscript from one of the editor's own authors or from a famous author published elsewhere, it goes into pile number one. Pile number one will be read by the editor himself/herself within a matter of days or at most weeks (Yolen, 1976).

If it is a manuscript from a respected agent or from a published, though not well-known author, or from a friend of a friend, it goes into pile number two. This pile is usually read by a secondary person first - an assistant editor, a manuscript reader, even an outside reader. Then a report on the script is written. It may be as short as, "A tale about two monkeys in Jataka who outwit a crocodile. It is based on an old folk motif. Author is Indian and has written this with wit and style. Suggest second reading." Or the report may run several pages. Then the editor reads the manuscript, keeping in mind the report of the first reader. So, if your best friend is a typist in the royalty department, be sure to send it through her. It will land your manuscript in pile number two. (And be sure to mention this friend in any covering letter.) (Yolen, 1976).

The third pile is called the "slush" pile. That is short for "unsolicited". All other manuscripts, those that come in without any significant pedigrees attached, go into pile number three. Slush it is called, and like slush it is often treated (Yolen, 1976).

Make no mistake - each manuscript, even in the slush pile, is read to the degree to which it deserves. And no amount of hopscotching from pile to pile will make an editor buy an unacceptable manuscript. Excellent slush pile stories will get a second reading by the next man or woman up the editorial totem. And if it is liked by the second reader, slush will be passed on to the editor. There are, every year, a few books published from the slush piles of publishing companies. But an experienced slush pile reader can tell a really bad manuscript by the first few paragraphs and often will not read further. It is the slush pile manuscripts that most often receive the printed rejection notes that tell you absolutely nothing about how close or far away your story was from acceptance (Yolen, 1976).

But if you are able to get into pile number two by dint of having an agent or a friend of a friend - or even by taking a course in writing with a published author who

takes an interest in your manuscripts - then you are most likely to receive a letter explaining why your manuscript has been turned down, if it is turned down (Yolen, 1976).

Of course if the letter you receive is an acceptance letter, you have a whole new series of problems opening up before you. But they are all problems with a happy ending (Yolen, 1976).

What can you expect now? First, if you do not have an agent to do it for you, you will discuss the terms of your contract with your editor (Yolen, 1976).

The terms of the contract include how much money the author will receive, how soon the book will be printed, and what happens if the book is sold to the movies, to a reprint house, or to a foreign publisher. The contract will also spell out the responsibilities of both the author and the publisher. If you have no idea what a good and liberal contract should look like, you may write to the Authors Guild (234 West 44th Street, New York, New York 10036) or the Society of Children's Book Writers (P.O. Box 296, Los Angeles, California 90066) for advice. Or you may consult a lawyer (Yolen, 1976).

The words "advance" and "royalty" always seem to puzzle new authors, but there is nothing simpler. An advance is the publisher's way of telling you they expect the book to sell at least that much. For example, if you receive an advance of \$1000.00 and 10% royalty, that means that when your book has sold enough copies to make up that original advance, the publisher will start sending you more. It is a kind of loan and a kind of payment for your work. (But be sure the contract says a "non-returnable advance" so that they do not ask for the kind-of-loan back.) For example, if your book sells for \$10.00, with your 10% royalty, you will receive 10% of every book sold, or \$1.00 per book. When 1000 copies of the book have sold, you have \$1000.00

or the exact amount of the advance. You have earned the advance. Everything else, any books sold now - as they say - is gravy. Twice a year the publisher totals up the amount of books sold times your royalty percentage and makes an accounting to you. If you have made up the advance, a check for the difference will be forth - coming (Yolen, 1976).

Once a book has been accepted and a contract drawn up, that is not the end of your responsibilities but a new beginning. You and many other people now have jobs to perform to turn your manuscript into a finished book (Yolen, 1976).

The very first job may well be yours, for the editor may feel the book needs to be revised. Try to welcome the process of revising. Think of the word "revision"; it means looking again, envisioning anew, seeing with someone else's eyes. It can be an exciting and very creative part of making the book (Yolen, 1976).

Another job may be finding a new title. Some authors have Title-itis. It is a disease of creating a book's title before the actual book comes to mind. Still other authors cannot come up with a name for the book without the aid of an editor and the sales force. Remember, titles are important. They catch the reader's ear the way a book jacket catches his eye. A good title can be an aid in selling a book (Yolen, 1976).

Your book will require a jacket that needs a flap copy. The part that tucks into the front of the book will tell briefly what the story is about. Your editor will take care of that. Your job is to provide a copy for the black flap - a brief biographical sketch and a few words on how you came to write this book. Read some jacket copies on new books and pattern yours accordingly. Include a good, clear photograph of yourself, on glossy paper, with the biographical sketch. It may be a studio portrait or an informal snapshot as long as your face stands out clearly (Wyndham, 1984).

Once a book has been accepted, revised, titled, and returned, it is ready for

editing. That means that someone at the publishing house, often a copy editor whose main job in life that is, will check your story word for word for spelling mistakes, errors in punctuation, and any other small item that might spoil the story. It is up to the copy editor to be alert to any mistakes for he is the last checker on the manuscript before it goes to the printer (Yolen, 1976).

At the printer, the book is set into galleys. These are long sheets of paper on which the text of your book is printed in a typeface picked out by either the editor or the designer. Several complete sets of the galleys are sent back to the publishing company to be proofread and checked for errors, and one of these sets will be sent to you (Yolen, 1976).

It will be the first time you will see your book "in print". The feeling you have will be a combination of fright and flattery. Suddenly the book is real. You may have sent out a badly typed manuscript, but were sent back Truth. It may be only moments or hours or it may be days before you're ready to sit down and edit Truth. But edit it you must. With a good steady eye and ruthless pen you must go over every last word. Be sure each and every word is exactly what you want, because this is probably your last chance at the thing. After that, the book will be untouchable. But change or add or subtract at this point with infinite care. Changing what is in print is expensive - and by contract, you may be charged for making too many such changes (Yolen, 1976).

After the galleys have gone back to the editor, the entire publishing company gears up. The printer makes corrections and runs off page proofs. These are corrected and any last minute changes are made. The manuscript then returns to the printer where the final complex machinery is set to work. The presses roll out huge sheets of paper on which sixteen of your book's pages are printed at once on a single sheet of paper (Yolen, 1976).



These proofs are once again read and checked. If the book is a picture book, these are color proofs and are gone over at the publishing house by the editor and the production staff with great care. The illustrator goes over them, too (Yolen, 1976).

Then the editor gives the printer the O.K.; the printer makes the final corrections, and then makes his final run. Enough of the large sheets are printed to make (for an ordinary children's book) 7500 - 10,000 copies. The pages, packed in a plain brown wrapper, are shipped to the bindery (Yolen, 1976).

While the printer is running off the large sheets on which the entire book is printed, the editor and designer back in the publishing house are busy with other details. For example, they are deciding upon a binding for the book. There are many color choices and grades of cloth or other materials to choose from (Yolen, 1976).

When the sheets arrive at the bindery, they are fitted onto a huge machine that folds and cuts them on three sides and stitches them on the fourth. They are then put into the binding case, on go the jackets - and the first copies are then shipped to the editor who sends one off to you (Yolen, 1976).

As soon as the process is complete, the editor will send you ten free copies of YOUR book, which you will no doubt show off and give away, until you realize that the next copies you get from the publisher, you will have to pay for. At a 40% discount, of course, but nonetheless, you are required to pay for your creation (Yolen, 1976).

Still, you are published. Things are now in the hands of the sales force, the promotion department, the schools and libraries, the bookstores, the reviewers, and ultimately, the young readers. A process that once-upon-a-time took a single person with a goose quill pen writing a book, making handbound copies, and distributing them to his friends is no longer so simple. With the over two thousand new children's books that are produced yearly, approximately six months and hundreds of people are

involved in each production. That does not even begin to count the author's original time (Yolen, 1976).

What you earn from a book depends on how many copies are sold, the sale price of the book, how long the book stays in print, and subsidiary uses (Woolley, 1989).

The usual rate of royalty on juvenile books is ten percent of the retail price, on a picture book five percent each for author and artist. There may possibly be an escalator clause - a provision for the publisher to pay you a higher royalty when sales reach a given figure (Woolley, 1989).

As mentioned before, royalties, with a statement of how many copies of your book have been sold and any subsidiary sales, are paid at stated times, sometimes twice a year, sometimes once a year, and there is always a time lag for bookkeeping purposes. If you receive royalties in May, the money will cover sales between the preceding June and December. Find the place in the contract that states when royalties are paid, so you will know when to expect the check (Woolley, 1989).

There is a relatively new copyright law which protects your work from the moment it is in "fixed form." This means once you have your story in manuscript form, you are protected automatically (Seuling, 1984).

Copyright is protection of your work, under United States law, against any unauthorized use. Your publisher will handle the details of copyright. A copyright notice must appear in every published book, and your publisher must send a copy of your copyrighted book to the Library of Congress. Copyright covers your book for your lifetime plus fifty years (Woolley, 1989).

Is all this worth it? It is worth it the first time you open your mail and find your finished book there. It may look different from what you had originally envisioned.

After all, a number of creative minds have been at work on it as well as your own. It is worth it the first time you see your book in a library or bookstore. It is worth it when it is first reviewed. It is worth it the first time you receive a royalty statement. It is worth it the first time your book is up for one of the major awards in the children's book field: the Caldecott Medal for "the most distinguished picture book", or the Newberry Medal for "the most distinguished contribution to children's literature. But perhaps the time it is most worth it is when you receive your first letter from a child reader in hard-to-read script or belabored print (Yolen, 1976).

Yes, books for very young children can be anything eye-or-ear catching: nursery rhymes; simple stories, tales, or fables; nonsense verse; wordless stories to follow in pictures; simple word books to show concepts (counting, opposites, shapes, and so on); colorful books to introduce letters (ABCs) and words (BABY ... BALL ... CAT ... SHOE ...); repetitive and cumulative delights (The House That Jack Built, Chicken Little, Old MacDonald Had a Farm). The full-fledged story, generously imbued with humor and drama, comes a little later as the child's attention and experience grow (Seuling, 1984).

Everything will begin in the imagination of an author who remembers what it is like to be a child. The author's story will be spotted, perhaps in the slush pile by a perceptive editor, and will be nourished to life by all those in the publishing house ... who are devoted to helping bring books and children together. As long as there are children who like to hear or read words and look at pictures, books for children will continue to be published with care, thoughtfulness, and love (Rochelle, 1991).

The unexpectedness of young children's reading tastes comes from the sort of tunnel vision that their limited amount of experience, sensory and physical, causes. They are trying to assess their individual place in the world (Zolotow, 1985).

The book is a world into which they are trying to fit their own understanding and feelings. It is good that there are so many different kinds of books being written for children today. If they don't like one book, they will like another. Children must be allowed to find the books that answer their particular emotional needs (Zolotow, 1985).

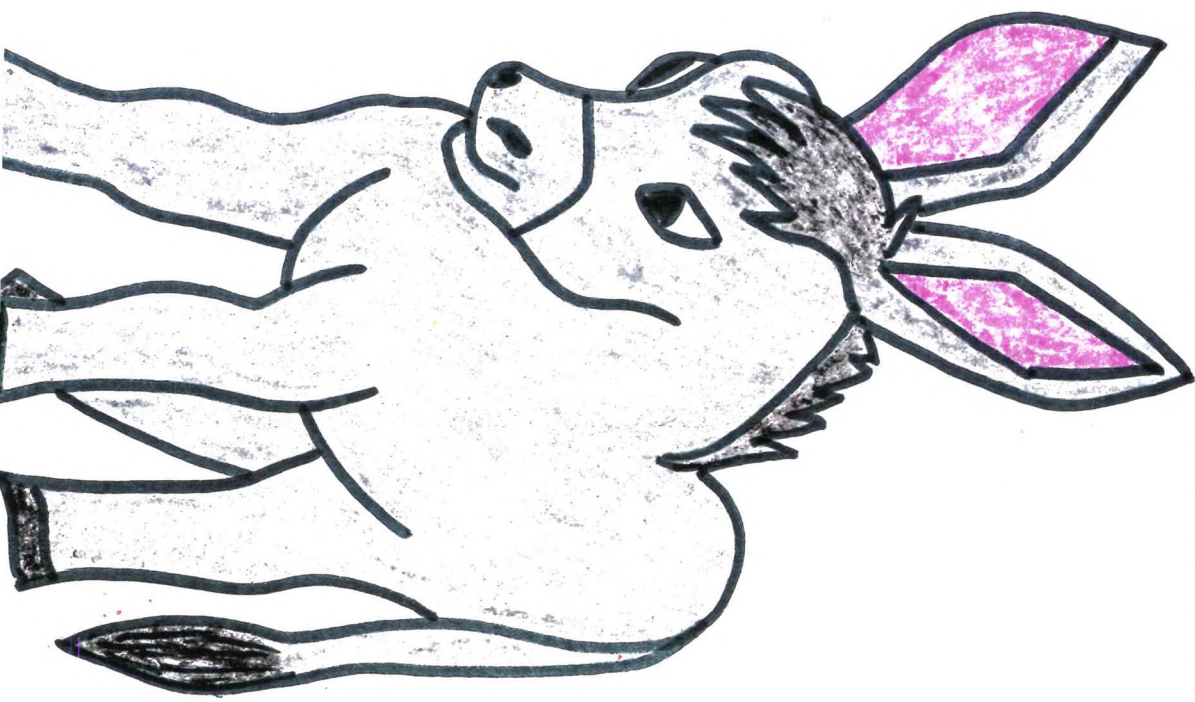
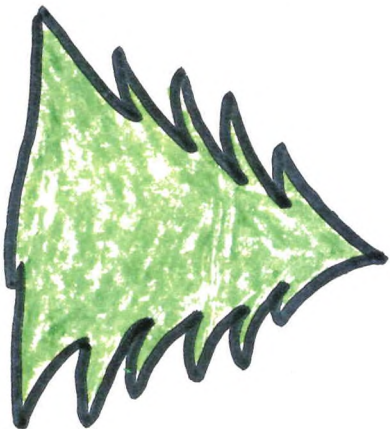
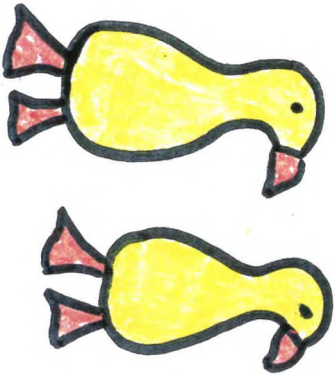
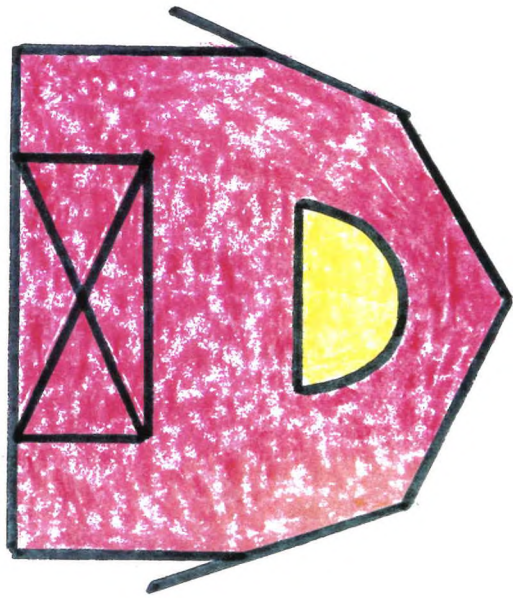
The picture book is one of the hardest things to write. It requires brevity and therefore the sternest discipline and testing of writing skill - not a word wasted, rewriting time and again - four, five, ten times, for the desired effect (Wyndham, 1984).

In the words of Walter de la Mare: "Only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young." So the picture book writer must be a perfectionist, for the production of a children's book of lasting value is a highly demanding art. And once beloved, a book will be read and re-read to thousands of children, possibly for generations! (Wyndham, 1984).

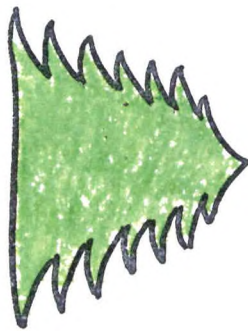
CHAPTERS III & IV

Picture Book: One Special Christmas

# One Special Christmas







*In memory of:*

*Dr. Peggy Leahy  
University of Dayton*

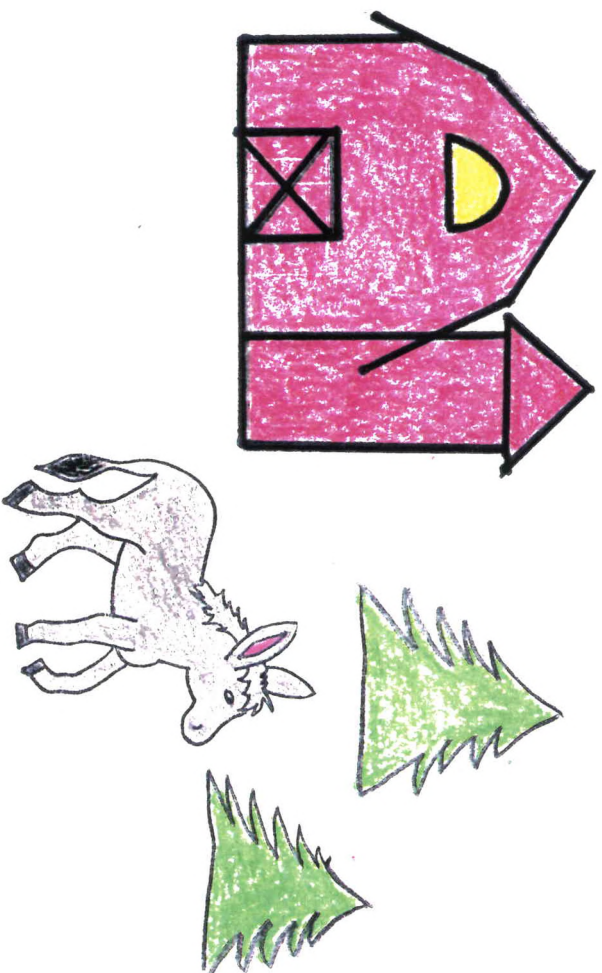
*One who always put the needs of others before her own.*

*Printed by:*

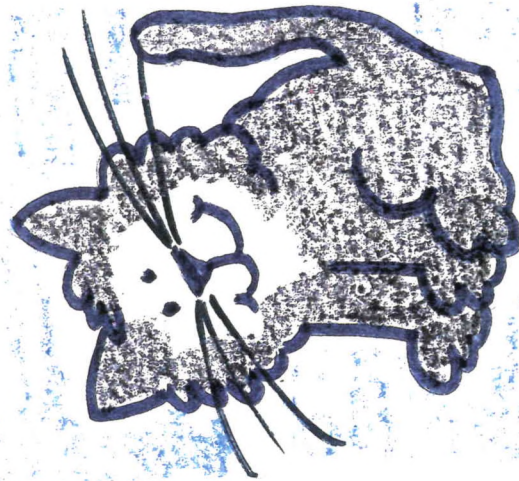
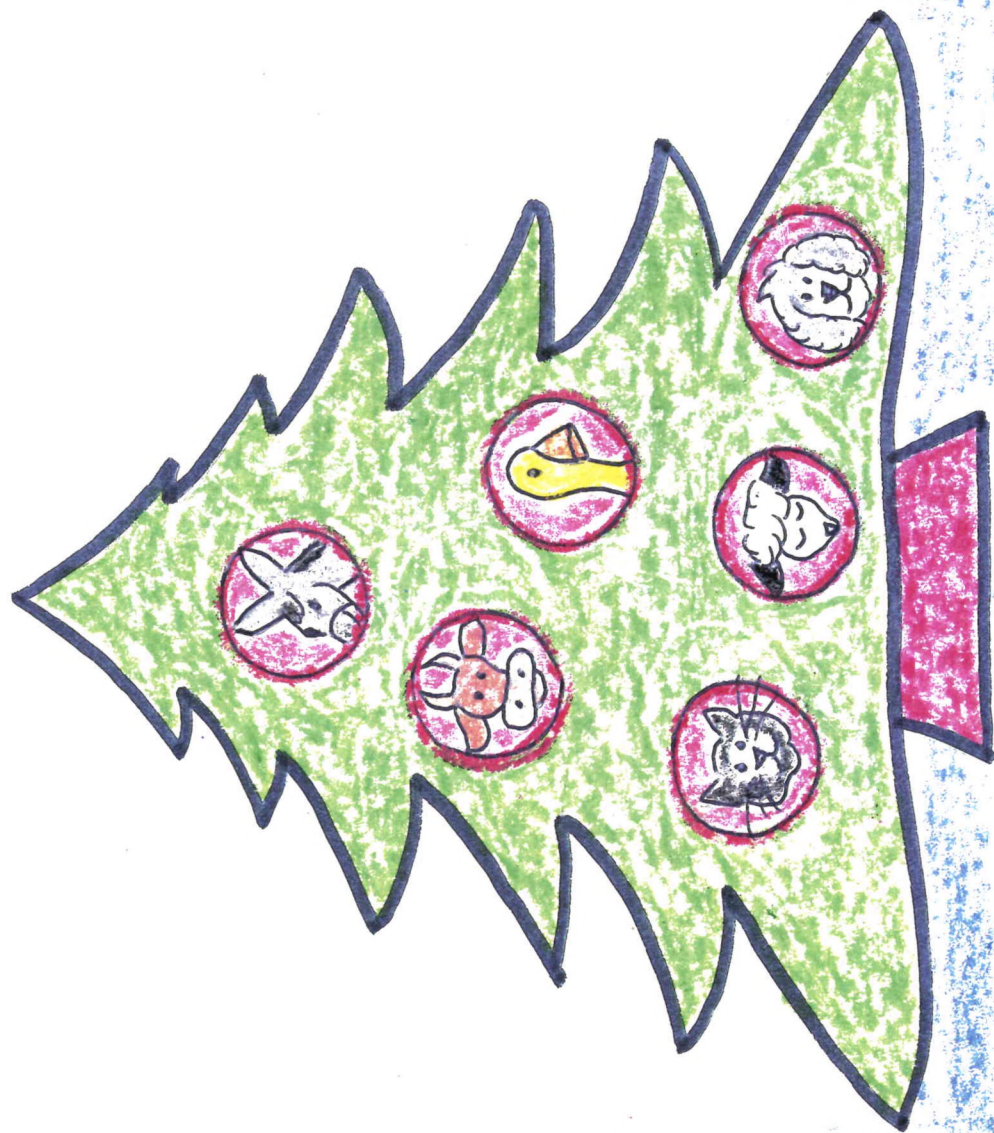
*Thompson Graphics  
Mechanicsburg, Ohio*



# One Special Christmas



written and illustrated  
by Jan Dagger

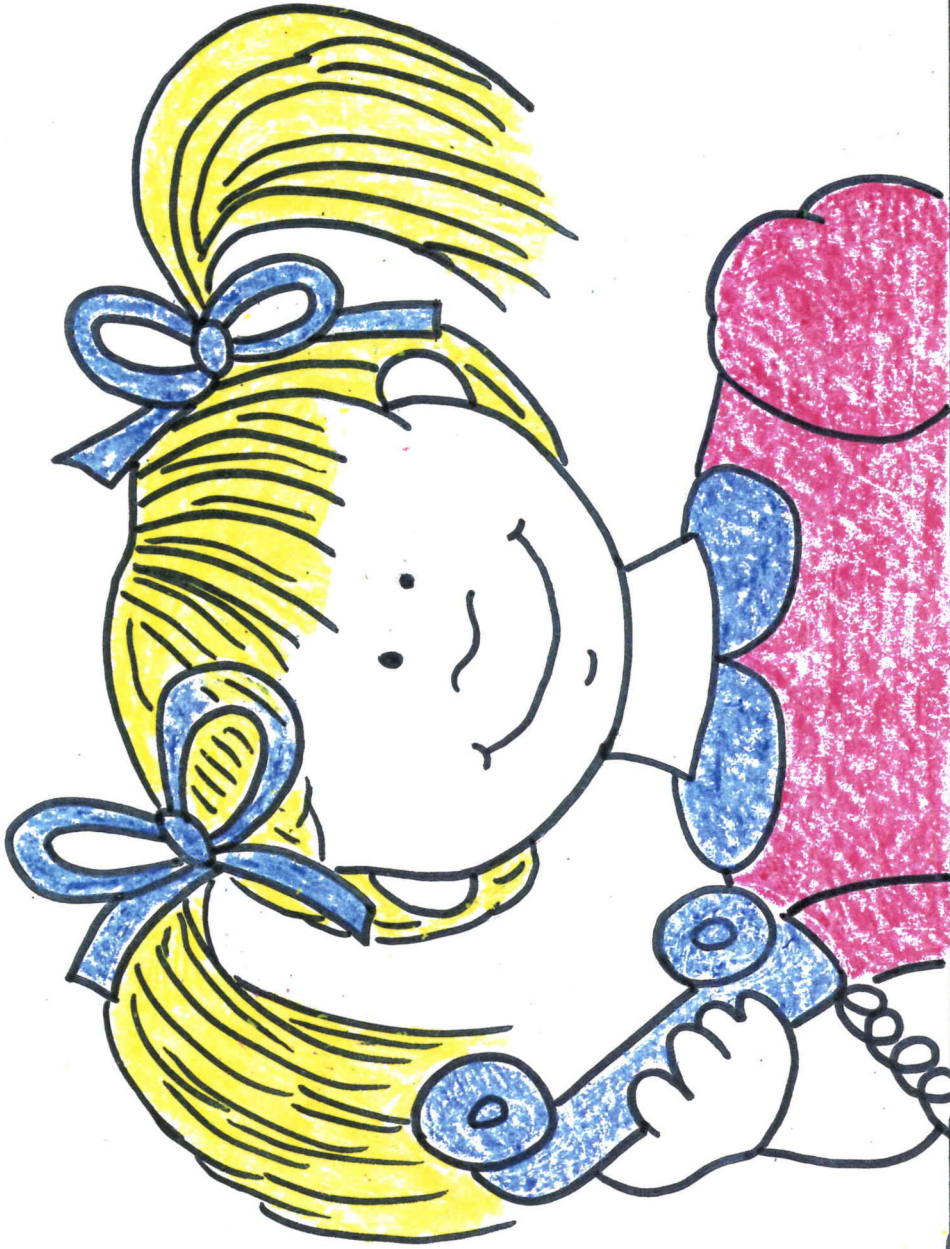


It was just about Christmas time when it happened.

Jessica's family had just finished putting up the beautiful

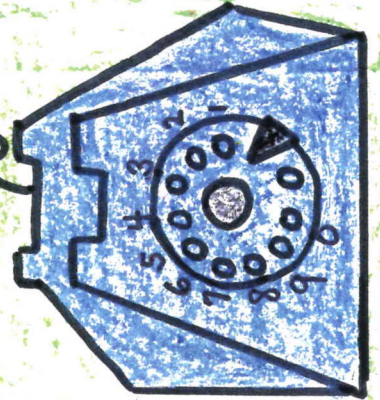
Christmas tree when the telephone rang.



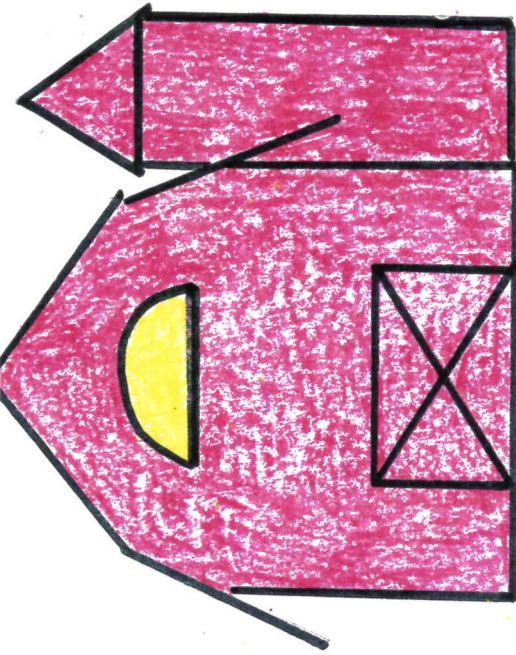
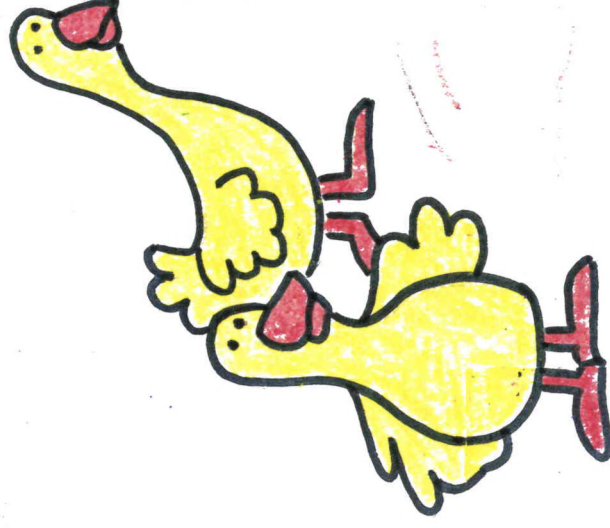
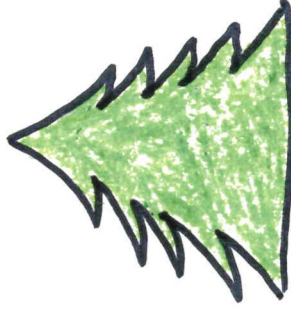


Jessica was so excited when Dr. Sanders,  
the veterinarian, asked if her donkey could be a part  
of the Christmas play in town.

"My donkey in a Christmas program!"







Jessica put on her coat and hat and hurried

outside to do her farm chores. As she walked towards

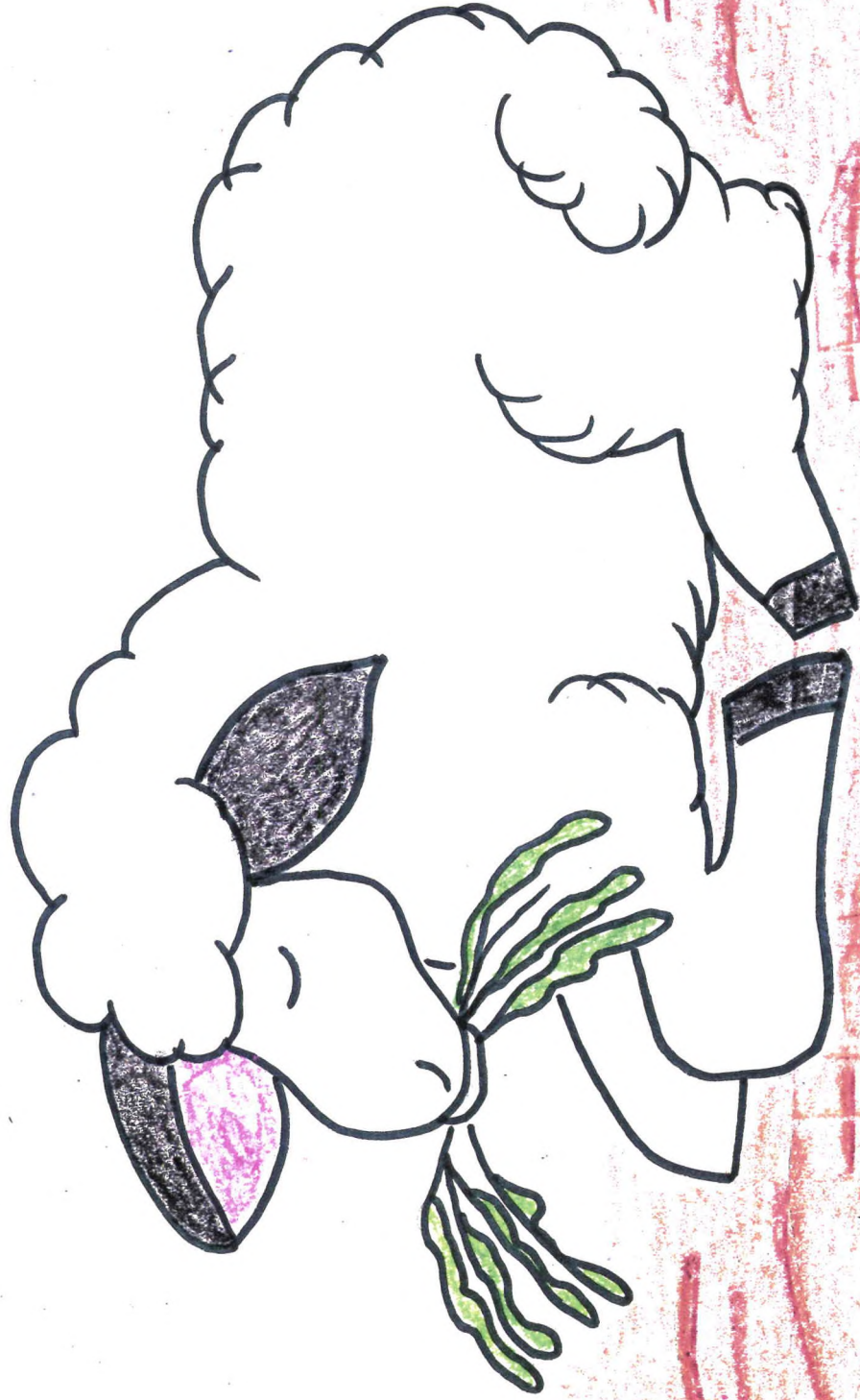
the barn, Jessica was filled with such Christmas happiness





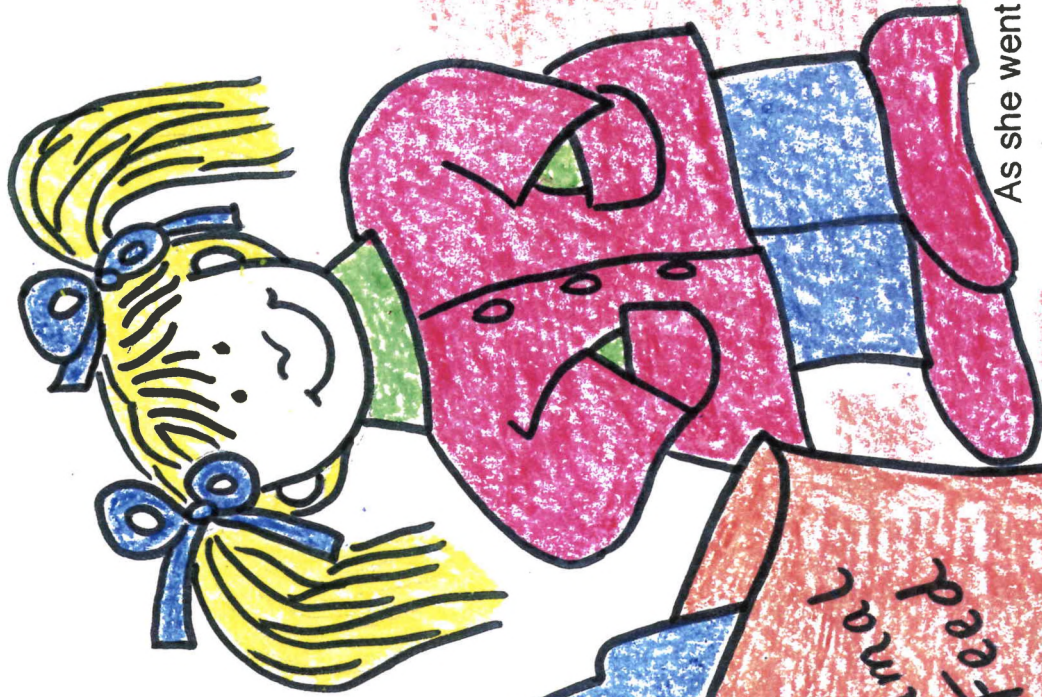
Inside the barn, she fed a flake of hay to the

brown-eyed cow named, Angel



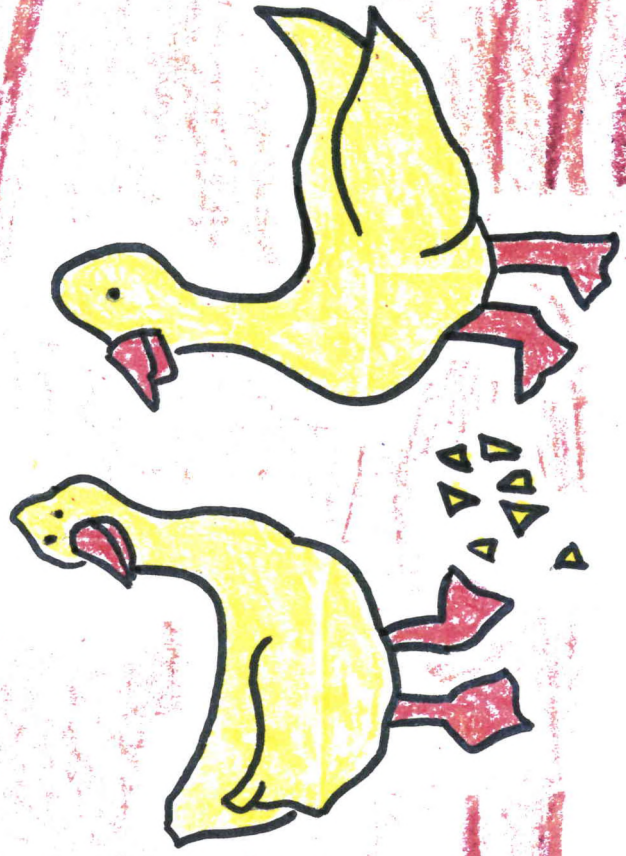
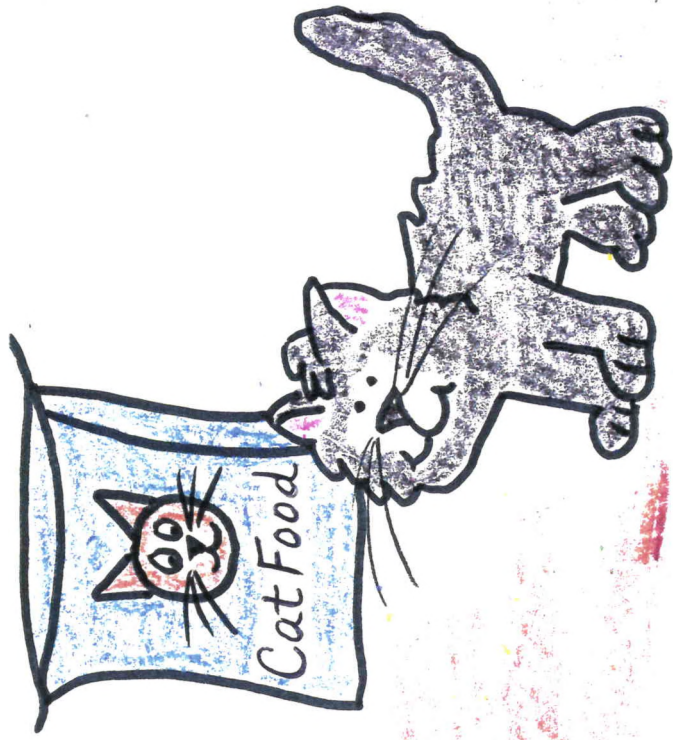
and to her woolly lamb called, Coconut.





As she went about her chores, Jessica hummed her favorite Christmas carol, "Silent Night".





Then Jessica fed each of the animals a scoop of corn.





When she came to her donkey, Jessica gave him an

extra scoop of corn and whispered, "Zach, you are going to

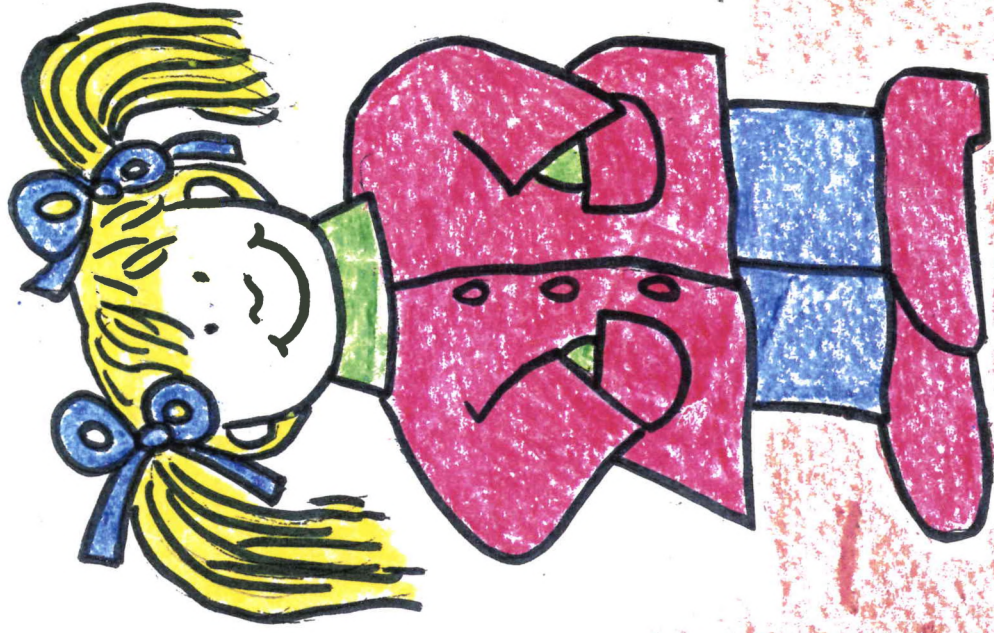
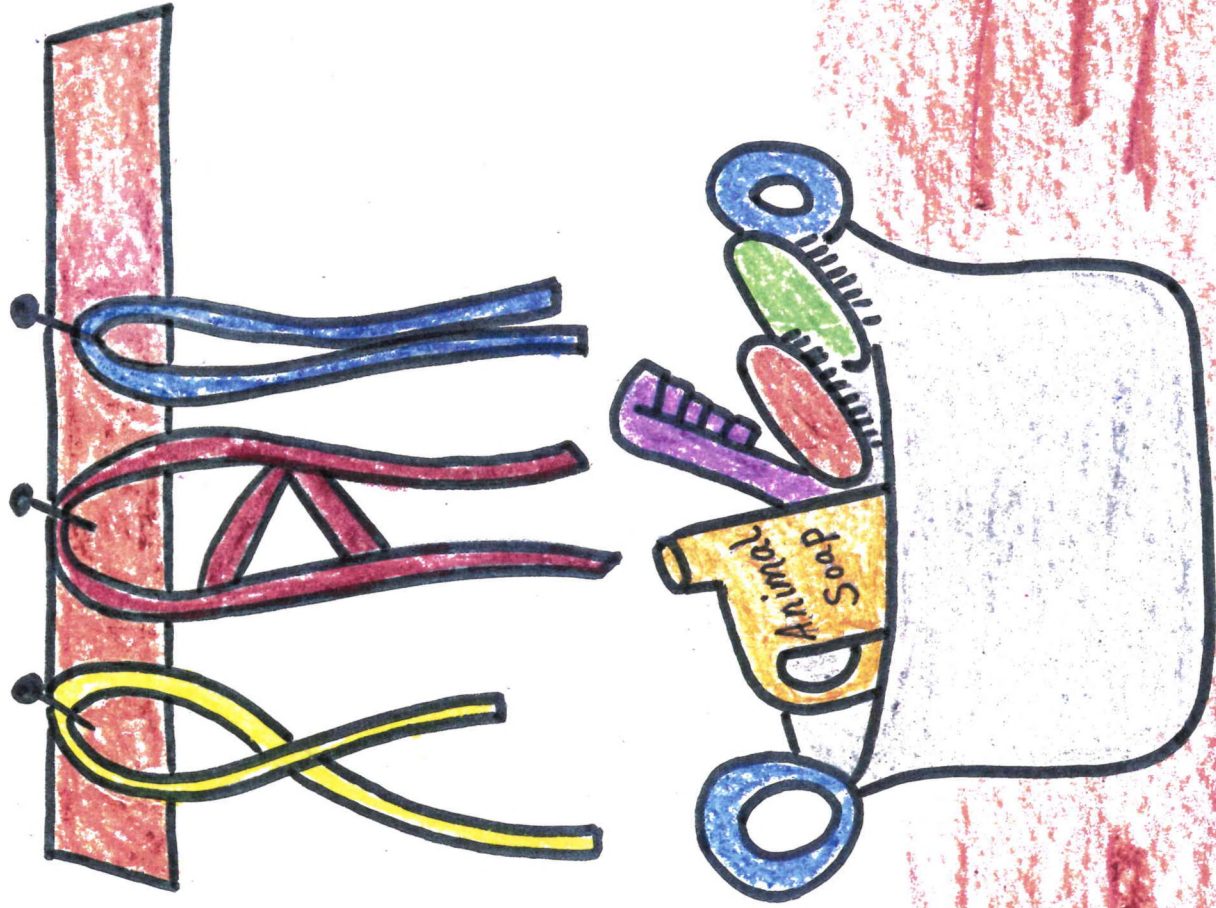
be the donkey in a very special Christmas program. I will





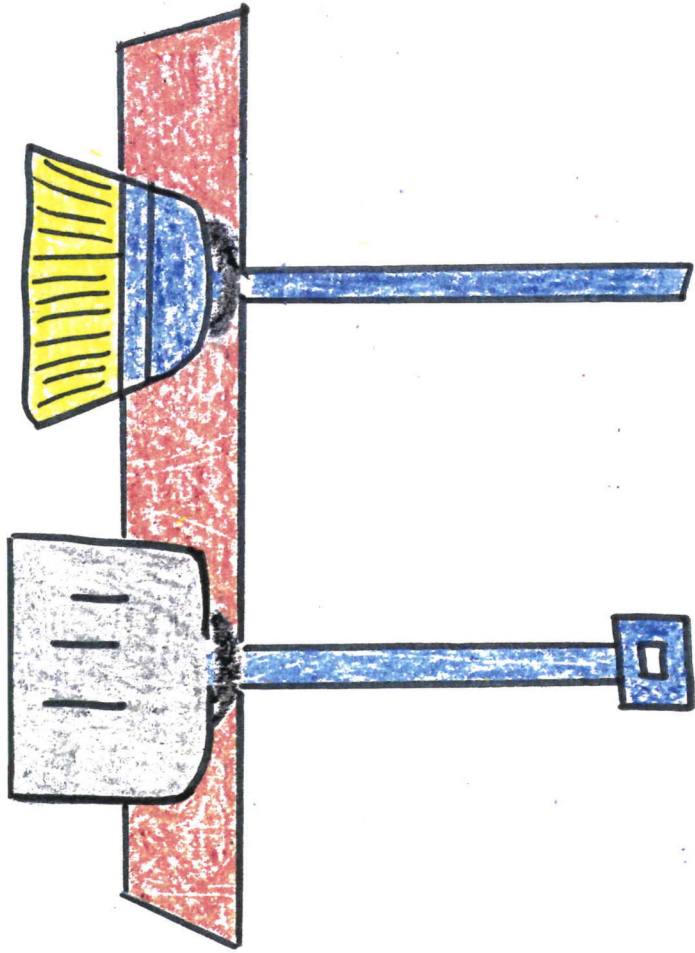
As Jessica gave her donkey a tight little squeeze, she said, "Oh, Zach, you look a sight. I must wash you and brush  
to make you look oh so handsome!"





As she turned away to find her grooming tools, she heard  
a voice say: "Oh, Jessica." "Oh, Jessica." "Oh, Jessica. Kay Dagger".





Jessica thought she was in the barn alone.

"Hey, over here silly", said the voice.

"So, I am going to be a movie star!" said the donkey.

Jessica stared in amazement. "Zach, is that you?"

"Well, don't just stand there. Make me look beautiful!"



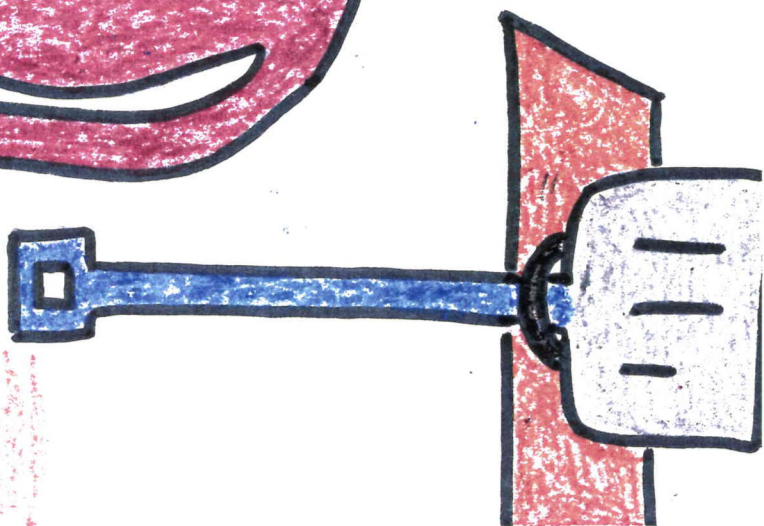


Oh, Zach, this is some Christmas!

There was so much Jessica wanted to say.

As she started brushing the donkey and chattering excitedly, she noticed the other animals moving towards her.









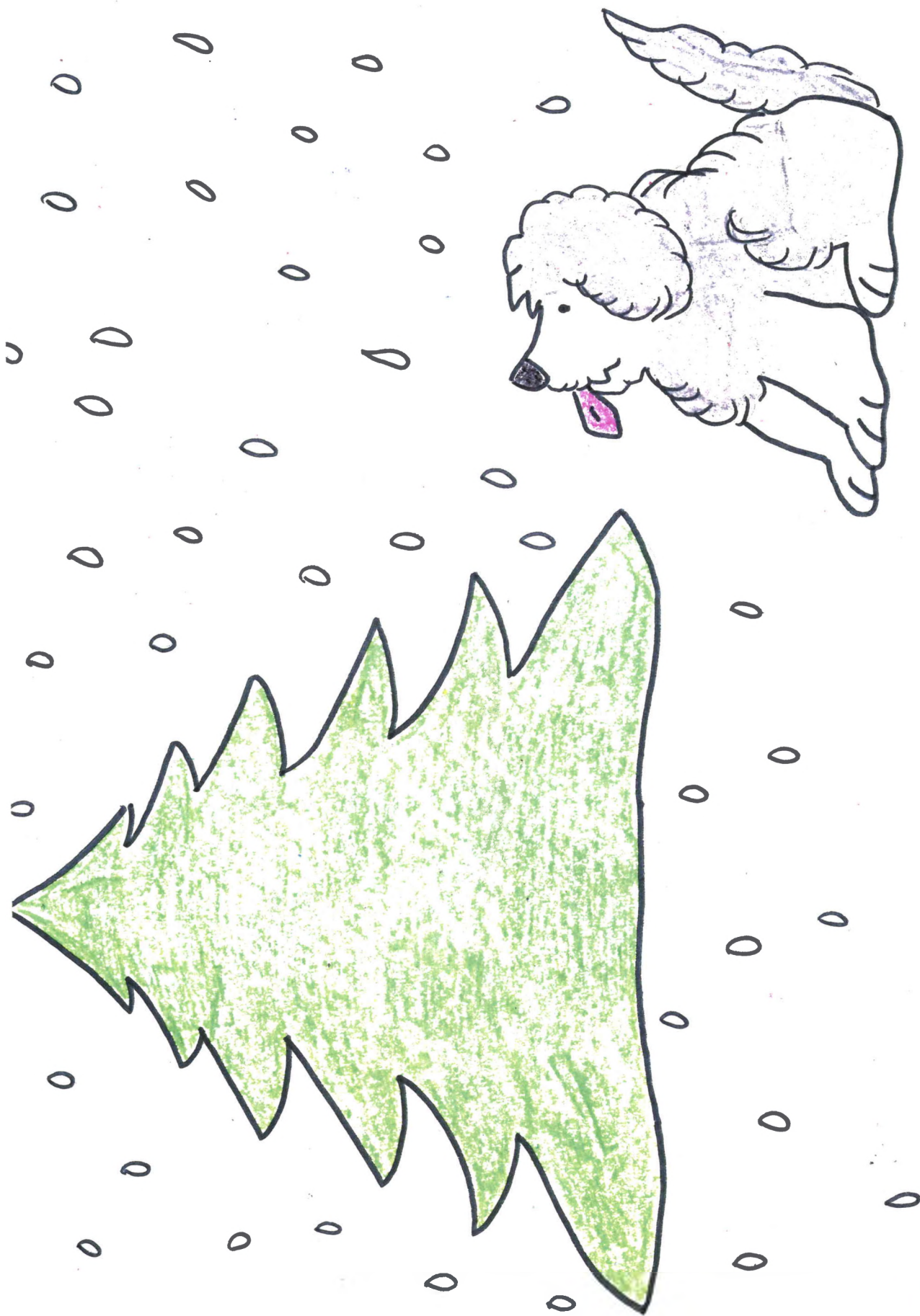
"Yes, may we go too?" asked Coconut, the sheep.

"Well," said Jessica. "We will just have to see about all of this."

After all, that is what the Christmas story is all about!"

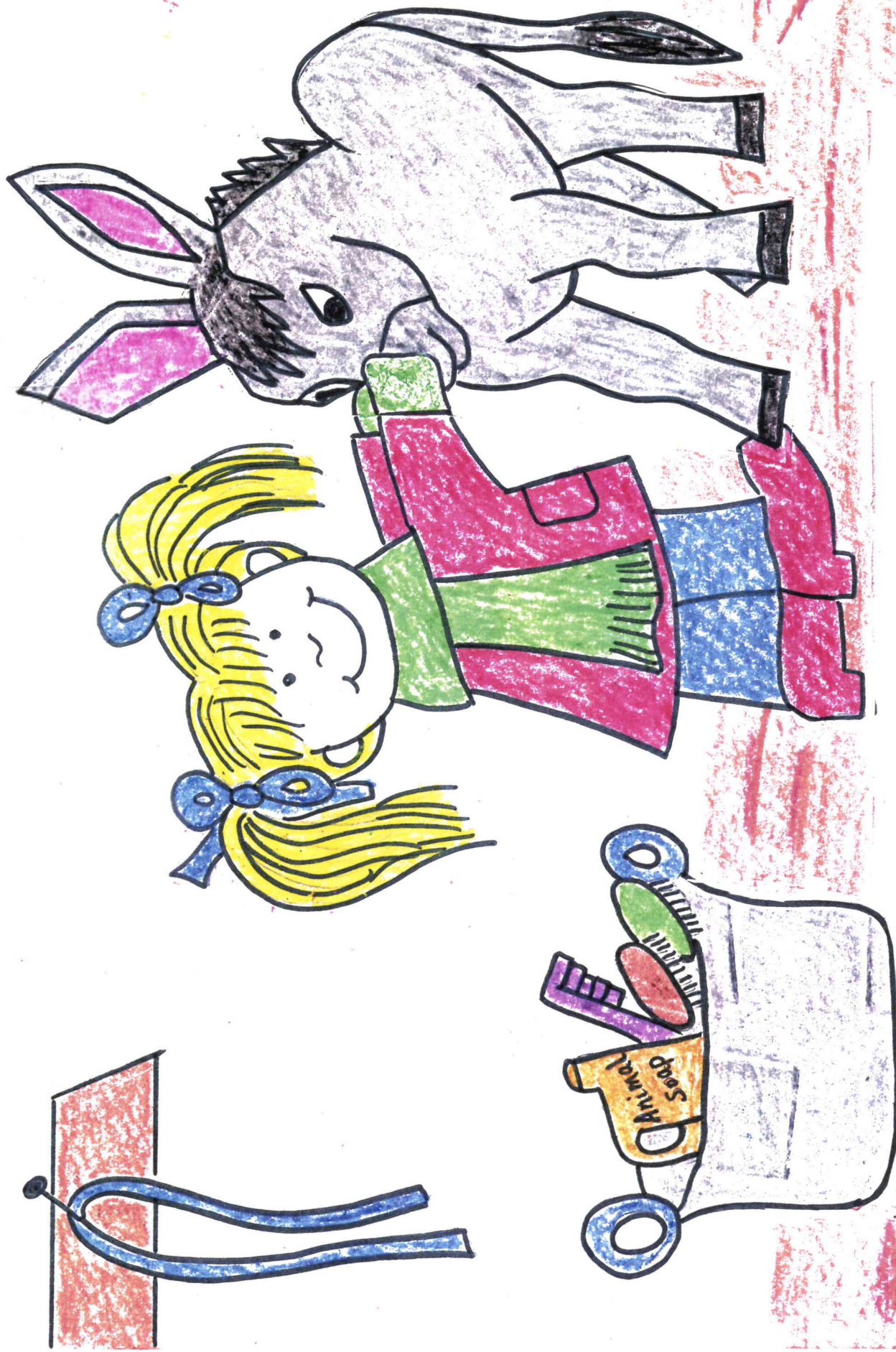
"Yes, I will ask Dr. Sanders if he would like to have more





As Jessica looked out the barn window, she noticed the soft snowflakes gently falling from the sky.





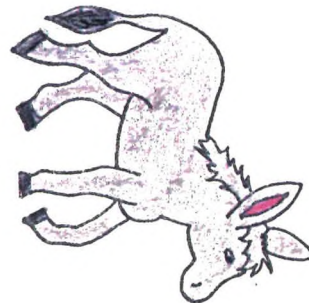
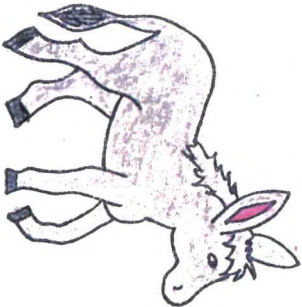
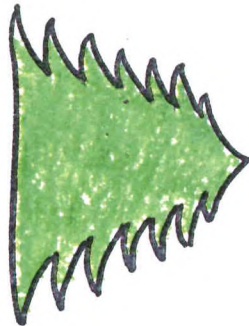
“Jessica put her grooming tools away and gave each animal a loving pat.

“Zach”, she said, “You have made this one special Christmas!”





As she closed the barn door, she joined the animals in singing her favorite Christmas carol: "Silent Night".



## CHAPTER V

## Recommendations and Conclusions

Chapter Two: It should be worthy to note, it is not recommended that most literature reviews be written in the nominative case using personal pronouns such as “we” and “you”. However, while researching the qualities of story writing and authorship, the context of the literature review became much more dynamic and meaningful when addressing the reader as a perspective author.

While compiling the literature review, the researcher originally attempted to write the content using third person, but the subject matter addressed seemed stale, lifeless, and ineffective. Thus, “we” and “you” are used frequently throughout the review of literature.

Chapters Three and Four: When addressing the early childhood audience as an author, always write from within the heart. Go back into your childhood; put together scattered thoughts or memories until you have pieced together a whole episode. Take that episode and expand and invent if you must.

Hopefully, One Special Christmas is such a creation. The author has taken a beloved family pet, the familiar setting of her farm, and added family warmth coupled with the love and enchantment offered by the true meaning of Christmas.

Perhaps the story could have just as well been entitled, One Special Donkey. However, the author decided the Christmas title more appropriate to insure young readers proper guidance during the process of story selection.

Finally, what could be more rewarding than reading your personal story creation while watching those eager, young faces light up in awe of your work? To captivate a young audience should give any author a sense of pride, accomplishment, and ownership. Hopefully, light will shine through One Special Christmas, and the

rainbows it affords will shine on and on for many Christmases to come - at least for the children in one particular kindergarten class.



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